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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Prince Hassan and Peres attend signing ceremony in Aqaba today

Jordan and Israel conclude signing of bilateral agreements

By Ahmad Shaker

Special to The Star
ISRAELI PRIME Minister Shimon Peres will today, Thursday, arrive at Aqaba airport on an Israeli military helicopter to attend the signing ceremony of the last bilateral agreements under the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan will meet Mr Peres along with Prime Minister Shafiq Zeid Ben Shaker and other high ranking officials. Prince Hassan and Mr Peres will patronize the signing of the science, culture, telecommunications and maritime border agreements agreed upon by officials in both countries. On Tuesday, Jordan and Israel signed the transport and aviation services agreement in Beit Jibrail in Lake Tiberias. Thursday's signing ceremony will take place at Aqaba Port Staff Complex. Foreign Minister Abdel Karim Kabariti and his Israeli counterpart Yehud Barak will sign the science and culture accord, while Communications Minister Jamal Sarayreh and Mrs Shalom Aloni, his Israeli coun-

terpart, will sign the telecommunications accord. Gen. Tahseen Shurdom, chief of staff of the Jordanian Military Intelligence and Moshe Koshanovsky, legal adviser at the Israeli ministry of defence, will sign the maritime border accord. The Aqaba-Eilat agreement will be signed by Aqaba Governor Dr Fayez Al Khasawneh and the Israeli ambassador in Amman Shimon Shamir.

After the ceremonies, Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Peres will deliver two speeches assessing the peace process and bilateral relations under the peace treaty. They will also evaluate the importance of the coming phases in the peace process.

Soon after that, all participants in the ceremonies will set out to Eilat for a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Peres in honor of Prince Hassan and his 250 member delegation of officials, diplomats and press.

Tuesday's Tiberias agreement on transport was signed by Minister of Transport Samir Kassar and his Israeli counterpart Yisrael Kassar. Under the agreement, citizens in

both countries will be able to travel to each country in their private vehicles as of 15 February. As far as public transport buses, these are scheduled to begin their trip within 90 days from the date of signing the accord; while the first flight will be operated within 45 days of signing the agreement. The national airlines in both countries will operate five weekly flights between Amman and Tel Aviv.

The transport accord allows the entry and transit passage of travellers and their baggage from both countries. Private vehicles will also be allowed to enter the two countries upon obtaining an entry permission at the crossing point. The same is applied to public transport and tourist buses, provided the route between two cities or points of embarkment and disembarkment are defined. Cargo and shipment trucks in transit to a third country and between the two countries will be fixed by schedules, except Jordanian trucks which are allowed to go directly to Israeli ports for loading or discharging of Jordanian goods. The same is applied to Israeli trucks and their

access to Aqaba port for the same purpose.

The agreement stresses the development of two railway lines: one connecting Haifa to Irbid and Mafrqa across the Sheikh Hussein Bridge in the Jordan Valley; while the second will connect the two countries' potash factories on the Dead Sea, with the ports on the Mediterranean and Red Sea through Wadi Araba.

As for the designation of borders, the two sides laid down, in June 1995, the land marks along a 220 kilometer long border, in the southern part of the country.

In August 1995, Israel and Jordan signed an agreement in Aqaba on their bilateral cooperation in the field of energy and geology, including the development of local energy resources, exploration of natural gas, solar energy and wind energy generation, and protection of the environment, geophysics and seismology.

At the Um Qais Rest House, the two countries signed in late August 1995 an agreement on cooperation in the field of medical and health care, including

the exchange of information, especially in modern medical equipment and technology, and the pharmaceutical industry.

In the field of ecology, the two sides signed in Aqaba in September of last year an agreement on cooperation and joint assessment of the ecological impact of industrial and agricultural projects and services. The agreement stipulates the joint monitoring of pollution, preservation of nature and its different elements; observing the discontinuation of water, air and soil, and combating desertification.

The Jordanian and Israeli police services agreement, signed in Beit Jibrail last October, calls for cooperation to combat crime and drug trafficking.

The two sides also signed an accord on trade, at the Plaza Hotel on the Israeli side of the Dead Sea in October of last year, which constituted a point of departure for economic cooperation between the two countries. Under this agree-

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Jordanian farmers driven to despair by falling prices, lack of markets

By Raed Al Abed

Star Staff Writer
DEIR ALA—His fate was to be born a farmer, to till the earth with his blood and sweat. His dry face and watery eyes long for the comfort of sleep as he waits for someone to bring him out of his despair. He gave up everything for the land. He feeds so many mouths, but his mouth and those of his children taste only the bitter sweet salt of the soil. Now, he stands alone. "Tell them to stop showing food ads on TV," farmer Mohammad Mufleh, shouts. "I cannot satisfy the needs of my children. I spent all my savings, and now I lost everything." The Jordan Valley is where hard-working farmers and modern technology have helped to create Jordan's food basket. The valley is home to more than quarter of a million, of whom 95 percent live on agriculture. But it is not a story with a happy ending. Most small sized farmers are facing a serious crisis. The

drop in produce prices, diminishing markets, mounting debt problems, and the increase in production costs have all conspired to bankrupt what was once the pride of the local economy, the Jordanian farmer. The Jordan Valley could soon be declared a disaster area if the authorities do not move to alleviate the conditions of farmers.

Over-production and lack of foreign markets for the agricultural yield have forced farmers to sell their produce on side roads. "It is no use delivering goods to the Central Market in Amman because prices do even not cover our production cost," said Mamdouh Adwan, chairman of the Jordan Valley Farmers Association (JVFA). They calculate production cost, from harvesting to market delivery,



but they ignore 100 days of farm labor, therefore produce prices are below the actual production cost. The eight-kilogram box of tomatoes is sold to merchants for 300 fils, while retailers

have fallen dramatically. In addition to last year's hike in water rates from six fils to 35 fils per cubic meter, labor wages have doubled in the last few years.

"The rise in the cost of production compared to the decrease in prices has driven us into the poverty trap," said Ibrahim Hazam, a farmer.

"The Government must cancel the regulated prices of produce (which are set daily). These neither serve the consumer, nor the farmer, only the retailers," said Mr Rakan El Faour, the general manager of JVFA. "The Government must float prices, and establish rural markets."

JVFA believes the Government should work for the industrialization of agricultural produce. "Such is one solution for the problem of agricultural over-production," said Adwan. Statistics provided by the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA)

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Thousands of butterflies die

By Molly Moore

LA Times-Washington Post News Service
EL ROSARIO, Mexico—High on the snow-capped ridges of the central Mexican highlands, thousands of tiny orange-and-black corpses litter the ground, their lacy wings in tatters and their velvety black bodies crumpled. Above the melting snow, tens of thousands of surviving monarch butterflies cling to fir branches in mammoth clumps of orange to autumn wings, seeking warmth in a mass of fragile bodies. The plight of the migrating monarchs—roughed on by rare snows in their Mexican winter resting grounds—has spread Mexico into an uproar, stirring widespread hand-wringing and an acrimonious debate among environmentalists from three nations over the extent of the disaster. "Butterflies are falling from the trees," said Homero Aridjis, leader of the Group of 100, a Mexican environmental lobbying organization that first reported the monarch kills and estimates that as much as 35 percent of the winter population—about 20 million butterflies—have died in an unusual cold snap during the past week. "This is just devastating." But the Mexican government, weary

of bad economic news, has tried to play down the monarch kill as one of its most popular natural tourist attractions enters the high season.

Government agencies, and some private groups that have sent investigators trekking into the butterfly sanctuaries 11,000 feet up the rugged mountains 100 miles west of Mexico City, place the snow-related death toll at somewhere between 10 percent and 15 percent of the monarch population.

The fragile creature is a ubiquitous symbol of summer in gardens across the United States—and an important barometer of environmental degradation across three countries.

In recent years monarch populations have been diminished by agricultural pesticides that poison the flowers on which they feed, deforestation of their mating grounds, pollution and urbanization.

Even without the man-made problems, the life of a monarch has never been easy. Some years, in some sanctuaries, birds gobble up to 40 percent of the butterflies, according to Juergen Hoth, a butterfly expert for the World Wildlife Fund. "And that's only birds," said Hoth. "Then you have to add mice. Then you have to add winter ... and exhaustion and the depletion of food."

But, Hoth said the unusual snow kills this year are worrisome.

"Butterflies seem to cope with large reductions in population," he said. "We don't know how large, however."

Long before the advent of continental free trade, the monarch butterfly has been freely making the 3,100-mile trip from Canada, through the United States to the mountains of central Mexico, requiring up to five generations of butterflies to complete the round trip.

New generations of butterflies often return to the same tree as their parents and grandparents, according to scientists. But in recent years, population growth, logging and agriculture have eaten away at the wintering grounds of the monarchs in central Mexico and the southern United States. Under pressure from environmental groups, the Mexican government a decade ago designated five monarch sanctuaries in the high elevations of the fir forests in the state of Michoacan.

Even so, illegal logging continues in the forests, and villagers have planted



corn and other crops in the buffer zones surrounding the sanctuaries, depleting the tree cover that serves as umbrella-like protection for the butterflies. "It is like punching holes in their blankets," said Aridjis, the Group of 100 leader, who grew up in a village near the monarchs' wintering grounds where he developed a special affinity for the butterflies. The melting snows from this past week's storm—which occur only about twice a decade in this region of Mexico—have left rivers of mutilated monarch wings, bodies and broken antennae on the forest floor. Injured

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Un vote décisif pour les Palestiniens

A LIRE p. 12 dans LE JOURDAIN

Arafat likely to prosper as Hamas dodges vote

Yet the Islamic movement, whose charter calls for war to wrest "every inch of Palestine," from the Jewish state, vacillated for months on whether to sponsor candidates and suspend the suicide bombings that killed dozens of Israelis since the self-rule accord was signed.

By Barton Gellman

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JABALIYA, Gaza Strip—Until a couple of weeks ago, Ennad Falouji was by any measure a leading figure in Hamas. He represented the group at public events, edited its official newspaper and, as far as any outsider could tell, participated in Hamas decision-making.

Today Falouji is disdained as a turncoat by Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Zohar, his newspaper closed and his expulsion from the Islamic Resistance Movement—Hamas's full name—declared by leaflet.

The reason is visible just about anywhere in the streets of this north Gaza neighborhood. Large color posters proclaim Falouji's candidacy for the Palestinian legislative council to be elected to govern the Gaza Strip and areas of the West Bank where Palestinian self-rule has been established. Falouji is running even though Hamas decided not to do so.

The new council would not exist but for an agreement negotiated between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and that is still anathema to Hamas.

Yet the Islamic movement, whose charter calls for war to wrest "every inch of Palestine," from the Jewish state, vacillated for months on whether to sponsor candidates and suspend the suicide bombings that killed dozens of Israelis since the self-rule accord was signed.

When Hamas hard-liners, most of them abroad, finally vetoed a draft deal with PLO leader Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority, Falouji and a handful of other local Muslim militants rebelled.

The long flirtation with compromise, and the splintering of the movement in its aftermath, reflect the dilemma that the



first popular ballot in Palestinian history presents for Hamas. "Everyone knows most of our people agree to these elections, and there is great popular support for the idea of a vote," Falouji said, with two armed guards nearby, in the campaign headquarters he fashioned from a warehouse of his family's soda distributorship. "The Islamic opposition must have some power, and that means it must have some members inside the new council."

Hamas is not in the election, but neither is it completely out. Not only do Falouji and a few like-minded apostates account for a handful of the nearly 700 candidates for 88 legislative seats, but the Hamas mainstream promised Arafat not to boycott or disrupt the balloting.

Most of its natural constituents are likely to vote, and Hamas is committed to recognizing the resulting council as the legitimate lawmaking body. Had Hamas run a full slate of candidates, evidence suggests it would have fared badly. Its 10 percent support in recent opinion polls would translate into even fewer seats because of complex electoral

math. Hamas was strong competition for Arafat's PLO in the years when respect was earned in the street by acts of zealous struggle against Israel. But the landscape of Palestinian politics has changed, and Arafat has come out firmly on top. "I think the Islamic movement is a little bit confused," said Ziad Abu Amr, a Gaza-based political scientist who once saw the power of Hamas as ascendant. "They lose if they participate, and they lose if they don't."

Nabil Shaath, Arafat's planning minister, put it more bluntly in a symposium earlier this month. The "real source of Hamas's worries," he said, was "fear of failure in the elections."

It is hard to say what mix of pragmatism, ambition and family financial interests prompted Falouji to print posters and start bidding for votes, but that is somewhat beside the point.

Arafat has used all those pressure points and more, including his mastery of six separate security forces, to divide and conquer opponents and assert unchallenged domi-

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Indo-Jordan Trade Promotion Week Opportunities await Jordanian businessmen

By Harry Pullens

Special to The Star
JORDANIAN-INDIAN commercial relations are set for a radiant future as the Indian Embassy in Amman launches its first ever Indo-Jordan Trade Promotion Week.

The Trade Promotion Week is expected to serve as a further step for business promotion in trade, investment, technology transfer, services and other industrial sectors to the benefit of both countries.

"The week is aimed at creating a greater awareness among the business community in Jordan about the existing potential of fruitful trade cooperation with their Indian counterparts," Sanjay Panda, second secretary and commercial attaché at embassy told The Star.

The event seeks to facilitate business contacts and identify avenues for possible joint ventures and expansion of bilateral trade agreements.

"Indo-Jordan trade promotion is governed by Trade and Economic Agreements signed by both nations in 1976," says Panda. There has been a tremendous response by the Jordanian business community, and "we are highly impressed to see the high level of interest in doing business in India."

A high-level business delegation from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) visited the Kingdom last September. As a result, a Joint Business Council (JBC) Agreement and Cooperation Agreement were signed with the Amman Chamber of Industry and Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce. On-going trade promotion is also expected to further consolidate signed

Since the peace treaty signed between Jordan

and Israel, we have viewed Jordan as a future business center in the region," said the official. Expressing thanks to the visionary policy of His Majesty King Hussein and his commitment to a peace, he pointed out that, with similar developments on the Syrian/Lebanese and Israeli tracks, and the lifting of sanctions against Iraq, Jordan will be able to fulfill such a role.

During the Trade Promotion Week, which ends on 20 January, information brochures entitled "Doing Business in India" are distributed by the embassy's commercial wing. These provide information on the process of economic liberalization pursued by India since 1991, and give insight into the opportunities offered by Indian industry and trade.

Jordanian businessmen visiting the center are given access to the computerized data-base on Indian trade and industry.

The policy changes effected in India since 1991 are designed to attract greater investment. They are also aimed at encouraging technology transfer between Indian and foreign companies.

"As the 10th largest industrialized nation in the world we have so much to offer a country like Jordan. Since we embarked on the process of trade liberalization in 1991, there has been remarkable progress. We subscribe to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)," he said. "All the best products in the world are now being marketed in India, and products made in India have reached international standards. Some of the competitive advantages India has to offer in the international markets are its cheap labor, abundant manpower and vast natural resources," says Panda.

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JORDAN

W E E K

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Awni Abu Ghosh



Dutch PM calls for bolstering ties with Jordan

His Majesty King Hussein received at the Royal Court, Sunday, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Wim Kok. They discussed the Middle East peace process, and bilateral economic cooperation. Accompanied by his Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo, Mr Wim Kok inaugurated his country's embassy in Amman. Before his departure to the West Bank and Gaza, the Dutch Prime Minister told journalists that the Netherlands will exert efforts to bolster its ties with Jordan in the economic, political, and investment fields. He added that Jordan plays a leading role in accomplishing a just peace in the region, and in creating a European-Middle Eastern partnership. Mr Kok also met Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and the Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament. The Dutch Prime Minister and his wife paid a short visit to the ancient city of Jerash before their departure. King Hussein decorated Mr Kok with Al Nahda Medal.

The press under wraps!

It could be argued that 1995 was a bad year for the press. Newspapers closures were followed by detention of journalists, most of whom were from the local weekly press. This gloomy picture is likely to continue. However, only time will tell. What is known is that a

most likely restrictive press and publication law awaits us in 1996. It is with this background, that the trial of Salam Nemat, the London-based *Al Hayat* journalist, opens today, Thursday. He, together with the chief editor of the newspaper Mr Jihad Al Khan, are being taken to court for publishing material implicating

Jordanian journalists of accepting bribes from Iraq during the Gulf War.

On another level, the case of the *Al Majd* Chief Editor, Mr Faid Al Rimawi continues to be heard in court. He is being charged with publishing a story from a Bahraini opposition leader calling for the expulsion of the Briton Ian Henderson from the Bahraini security services. The court case has caused an outcry among prominent lawyers and activists taking up the case. Seen as an issue of public liberties, former ministers Hani Al Khasawneh and Ibrahim Izidin are taking part in the hearing. What is interesting is that Mr Al Rimawi is being charged with an obscure law that was placed on the statute books in the 1960s, but was never used till the present case. Critics argue that it was not even used during the

relations with the enemy that has exceeded even the ending of the state of war and hostility to a state of coordination and cooperation. It goes on to say that, "the repercussions and agreements resulting from such a visit will deprive the Palestinian negotiators from using many important cards" in their negotiations. The statement also states that the "visit constitutes a mechanization of the Zionist medical establishment at the expense of our own." Hence, "we wonder how Jordan can then be able to promote our own medical institutions, which are among the best investment enterprises on the Jordanian and Arab levels, after that appraisal of the enemy's medical and treatment services."

The statement regrets the inclusion of a number of Jordanian deputies in the visiting group.

Tuyoor Al Hathar to be allowed

Tuyoor Al Hathar, by Ibrahim Nasrallah, will be allowed to enter the country. The Director of the Press and Publication Dept., (PPD) Mr Mohammad Amin said that the novel was given the go-ahead about two weeks ago. He told *Ad Dustour* that Nasrallah was already notified of his department's decision. He said that one of the reasons for last week's media hype about the refusal of the PPD to allow publication was engineered by the author and the publisher who wanted to market the novel.

UNRWA's new secretary general

UNRWA is to have a new Commissioner-General. The Danish Peter Hansen will replace Ilter Turkmen in the office expiring early this month. Mr Hansen officially takes over on 20 January. A specialist in international relations, Mr Hansen has a lot of experience in refugee issues. His present post as UN Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs will be invaluable as he takes over one of the biggest UN organizations. He will be responsible for carrying out a number of crucial decisions, one of which includes the movement of the UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to Gaza.

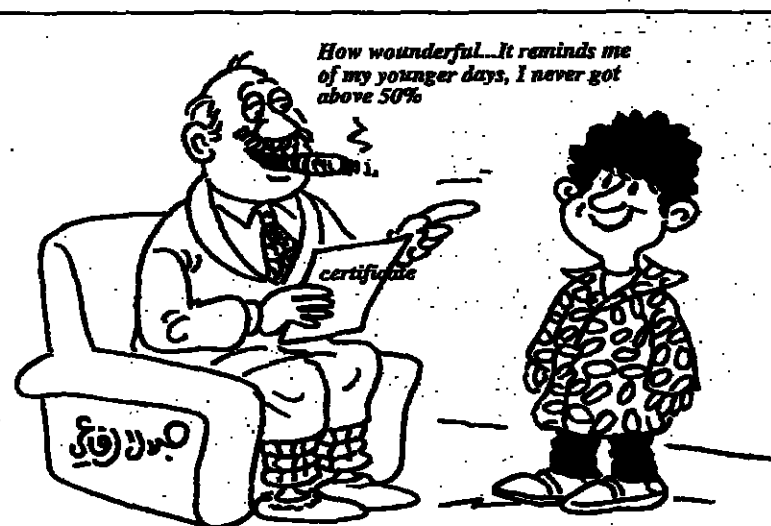
New election law—who cares?

Informal consultations and information gathering have started in the Lower House on the new election law which the Government is about to present for discussion. *Ad Dustour* daily said that earlier this week a meeting was held in the Prime Ministry where the exchange of views on the different aspects of the draft was presented. The newspaper added that another informal meeting was also convened in the office of the Speaker of the Lower House with the participation of deputies from the different political spectrum. The participating deputies in these unofficial exchanges were unanimous on having a modern and civilized election law to replace the existing one which is based on the principle of 'one man, one vote'. Speaker Sa'ed Hayel Srour was keen on these consultations to meet the deputies from different political orientations individually and in groups, so that the ideas presented could be freed from any kind of emotional or factional pressure.

It is high time for the current 'deputies, who were elected in accordance with the 'one man, one vote' law, to start their due debate on such an important law. A country of political pluralism and democracy badly needs an efficient and up-to-date law which copes with these serious developments.

Hashd calls for no confidence vote

A Hashd delegation headed by the party's Secretary Salem



Prevention, deterrence, then treatment

The Ministry of Administrative Development has completed its report and recommendations on combating corruption. The ministry's conclusions have been deduced from the working papers presented to its two-day seminar (November '95), a follow-up workshop of general secretaries and deputy ministers, and from experiences of other countries facing the same problem. The 'national strategy of combating corruption' is now in the hands of the Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker for consideration before enacting the recommendations included. The recommendations outline three main dimensions: prevention,

deterrence, and treatment. The ministry's document includes proposals of updating a package of existing regulations and the method of the judiciary in dealing with corruption cases. The draft strategy suggests the introduction of a 'moral code'—similar to that of the medical doctors and lawyers associations—which the public civil servant would pledge to abide by. It also proposes the setting up of a special department of corruption investigation to be associated with the Ministry of Justice or the High Judiciary Council. This department will develop measures to promote the role of the prosecution in dealing with such crimes.

Al Nahas met the Committee of Public Freedoms of the Lower House this week, and handed over a memorandum on the gross violations of public freedoms in the country. The delegation also explained the implications of the case taken against Hashd to the court by the Interior Ministry. The delegation presented a special document on this issue, and demanded a vote of no confidence against the minister concerned.

Jordanian workers abroad

There are 200,000 Jordanians who work in other Arab countries according to a recent study by the Ministry of Labor. The figures up to 1993 show that there are also 75,000 Jordanians



Srour

that work in foreign countries. Many factors account for this but the most important is unemployment. The majority of Jordanian workers, according to the study, are in Saudi Arabia (158,000), while there are 34,000 workers in the United States.

New airline company is going places

A new airline company is to be set up very shortly to cater for the new influx of tourists from the surrounding countries. This is expected to gather momentum as we enter the new peace era. The new company will have its base in Amman's Civil Airport in Marka and it will go to such short destinations as Aqaba, Tel Aviv and other regional airports.

But this is indeed exciting news. A new airline, no matter how small it is, will be a welcome competition to Royal Jordanian which has always monopolized the air routes to this country, and has managed to make a loss.

The Civil Airport is presently being equipped with a new 19,000 square meter hall at a cost of JD 380,000. The General Manager of the airport, Mr Rashid Abu Said said that they are waiting for the

first 50-seater Dash 8 airplanes.

How Israel views cultural relations

Among other agreements with Israel a convention on cultural relations between Jordan and Israel is likely to be signed. According to *Al Bilad* weekly, the recent official visit of His Majesty King Hussein to Tel Aviv gives impetus to such an accord. It added that the Israeli side wishes the Jordanian side ensure the free access of the citizens of both countries to religious and historical places, as well as unconditional visits and mutual performances of those visitors on both sides.

Al Bilad said that the Israelis have also asked Jordanian officials to remove racial and ideolo-

logical discrimination terms from the Jordanian cultural vocabulary and the curricula of the Jordanian Ministry of Education, especially those terms associated with Zionism, racism and occupation. Moreover, the Israeli side insisted that the Jordanian side should take all the legal and administrative measures that ban anti-Israeli propaganda by any organization or individual, and the abolition in Jordan of all platforms or societies which are adamant in their hostility to Israel. The point is, doesn't that obviously manifest Israel's hostility to certain Jordanian structures? Does Israel accept to apply at home the same request vis-a-vis the Jewish organizations which are hostile to the Palestinian and other Arabs?

Dr Majali observes Palestinian elections

Senator and former prime minister Dr Abdel Salam Majali left this week for the PNA areas at the head of an official Jordanian delegation to take part in the international monitoring team of the first election of the Palestinian council in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

In Jericho, Dr Majali told reporters in regard to a possible Jordanian-Palestinian confederation that "we are waiting for the Palestinian brothers to be able to say their word." He added that Jordan would welcome any close relations with the Palestinians, but the people of the two countries must decide on the form of such relations. Majali is confident that tolerance will prevail in the region, and its peoples will live in freedom and democracy once there a breakthrough is achieved on the Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese tracks.



Dr Majali

Jordan and Israel sign bilateral agreements

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Jordan attained customs reductions on its exports to the Israeli market, while other goods were fully exempted from duties.

Last October, Jordan and Israel signed an agricultural agreement which underlined the preparation and execution of agricultural watering projects, and joint

agricultural watering projects. According to this agreement, Jordan shall enjoy preferential status in exporting fresh agricultural produce to Israel, once the latter decides to import such goods. These products will also be customs exempt. The agreement also provides for the launching of joint agricultural projects.

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Jordanian farmers driven to despair by falling prices, lack of markets

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show that the agricultural sector only contributes eight percent of the GNP. It makes up 19 percent of exports, employs 7.4 percent of the labor force—the majority of workers are from other Arab nationalities—and feeds nearly 22 percent of the country's population. The Jordan Valley produces 90 percent of the country's vegetable needs.

The Jordanian farmer is a dying breed. We ask the Government to exempt farmers from their accumulated debts which are estimated at JD 65 million. This will help farmers to get back on their feet," Adwan said.

"If not total exemption, we demand the Government to implement residual debts on a long-term basis for farmers," Adwan said.

Administrative council members of the JVFA suggested that the council should ask the JVA to lift laws that ban selling agricultural land. This proposal, they say, should help indebted farmers cover their basic needs.

"Farmers are feeding the people for free. Food security is equivalent to national security, and defending the farmer is more important than defending the consumer," Faouri said.

Finding new Arab or foreign markets, and facilitating measures for exporters will help farmers to sell their goods, and relieve them of the problems of the local market.

"Our problem is a political one. If Syria closed its borders, for example, we can not sell our goods, and this also applies to the Gulf states," Adwan said. "It is the Government's duty to find new external markets, we have good quality produce to promote."

"Our officials were invited to international conferences on agriculture, but they didn't take anyone from the concerned sector; neither did they promote our products," farmer Moussa Aydi said. "We welcomed the peace treaty because we relied on it to bring prosperity to this sector. Unfortunately, peace failed to satisfy the needs of the people of this valley."

"The cost of production requirements are floating, which turns the market into something like the black market. There must be a parallel market to save farmers," said Al Aydi. "They are looking towards a greener Jordan in the year 2000. Unfortunately, the situation drives him to leave his land, more of which is becoming into pastures."

The JVFA needs to be supported so that its role can be enhanced. "The JVFA is bankrupt, we sent an appeal to the Prime Minister to finance us with JD 3 million, so we can resume our role," said Adwan.

CLASSIFIEDS

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Arafat likely to prosper as Hamas dodges vote

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... of the Palestinian political scene.
Arafat's new resilience was clear as he rode out the assassination, nearly under his nose, of a Hamas bomb-builder long wanted by Israel.
The death by booby-trapped telephone of Yehiya Ayash, assumed by nearly everyone to be Israel's work, could have been a major embarrassment for Arafat just 15 days before the vote. But he merely issued a mild denunciation and instructed his forces to tell Hamas the funeral rally had better not blame him. It did not, however, a Hamas statement quoted by news services accused senior PLO police officers of assisting Israeli intelligence "in finding out the location of the martyr Ayash. ... This is a warning to people, so be warned."
A similar assassination in November 1994 severely tested Arafat's grip on power. Hamas and the more militant Islamic Jihad blamed Arafat's "puppet regime" when Islamic Jihad activist Hani Abed died in a booby-trapped car.
Street rallies in Abed's memory verged on rebellion. Arafat paid a condolence call at Abed's mosque but had to flee an angry crowd and lost his trademark kaffiyeh in the melee.
In the intervening 14 months, and particularly the last three, the peace deal with Israel has begun to bear conspicuous fruit. Since September, Arafat has paraded triumphantly through West Bank cities from which Israel withdrew after 28 years of occupation. He has built a patronage system that directly supports about a third of Gaza's populace—and that denies crucial benefits to opponents. A security crackdown, brutal at times, has given Arafat's police control over what Hamas clerics say in Friday sermons in their mosques. ■



● Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, Monday, planting trees to mark the Ann Arbor Day celebrations at the Al Hashemite University in Zerga. The celebrations, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture are part of the effort of making Jordan green by the year 2000. This year, the ministry will plant about six million tree saplings. The celebrations also underline Jordan's commitment to the protection of the environment.

Indo-Jordan Trade Promotion Week

Continued from page 1
The official noted that certain "thrust products" which have tremendous potential for accelerating trade between Jordan and India have been identified; they include project implementation, joint ventures, fertilizers and chemicals, construction, road and rail networks, engineering goods, expertise and pharmaceutical products.
India, the biggest traditional buyer of Jordan's phosphate and potash has also signed an 11-year joint venture export agreement of sulphuric acid export to India.
Jordan's imports from India include textiles, engineering goods, pharmaceutical products and other miscellaneous products like packaging materials. The trade levels between the two countries have been favorable to Jordan, noted Panda. Jordan's exports to India constitute approximately 11% of its total gross national exports, and are valued at \$7 million JD, while sub-continental India exports were valued at only 28 million JD, in 1995. ■

Jeremy Dodson The American Marriott Hotel Champions Manager

● Mr. Dodson studied Hotel & Catering Management in England. After graduation, he worked at London Marriott as Restaurant Supervisor, then moved to JW Marriott Century City, Los Angeles as Restaurant and Bar Manager. In 1991 he went back to London Marriott Grosvenor Square as Restaurant & Room Service Manager and in 1993 joined the Champions Marriott Hotel as food and Beverage Service Manager until his transfer to the Amman Marriott Hotel to assume his duties as Beverage Manager and in charge of the new Champions Restaurant.



Hamzi Moghrabi of ADC 'The US Constitution is the contract we have with America once we became its citizens'

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Hamzi Moghrabi is the Chairman of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee. He succeeds the long-term president and founder of the ADC James Abourezk. Mr. Moghrabi has long been an active member of the ADC, serving as a chapter president for Colorado. He talked to The Star's Marwan Asmar and Lubna Khan while in Amman.



Could you give us a brief structure of the ADC?
The ADC is a civil rights organization in the US that protects Arab Americans from discrimination and stereotyping. It started in 1980. The ADC is open to all Arab American regardless which country they come from or what religion they are or their political affiliation. It is an umbrella organization that is open to all Arabs who immigrate to the United States. It has a board of directors, and 75 chapters in the US with a membership of more than 30,000.

The difference between the ADC and other Arab-American organizations is that other organizations exclude people like for instance village-based or city-based organizations or country-based organizations such as the Ramallah Federation. The Lebanese and Palestinian societies also exclude other people who are not of the same origin. ADC is an inclusion organization catering for all Arab Americans from different walks of life. The only thing we believe in is that the US Constitution is the contract we have with America once we became citizens of that country. We have obligations, and at the same time we have rights. We sense no one is going to relieve us from our obligations and no one should deny us our rights. This is the basic existence of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee.

Some people have criticized the ADC for appealing to a certain strata of the Arab-American community. What do you say to that?
That is not true. But the issues are there. Some people say we are a Lebanese club, which we are not. We happen to have issues with the problems in Lebanon. So we cater for those. Some people accuse us of being a Palestinian organization; only catering for Palestinians. There is a Palestinian issue which we have to cater for, we cater for Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan, and Yemeni issues.

That is very interesting because I thought you were a lobby in the US?
We are not a lobby. We are a civil rights organization which means if there is any problem we go to the courts. Civil rights are different from human rights. We see that civil rights are not compromised in a country. We take evidence of cases, we go to courts and if we want to change laws, we go through our grass roots to let them talk to their representatives in Congress and change laws. We have now two major issues in the US: the anti-terrorism bill and the immigration bill. They want to adjust the immigration bill so that there will be no family reunion, but there will be a waiting of 10 to 15 years for children to join their parents, there will be no more family reunion of parents. Employment will be affected. You need to spend five years in employment before you get a permit. They are making it very difficult. This is a very unconstitutional issue because America is a people of immigrants, how can you deny immigration for a country that is based on immigration.

elect our representatives... then politically and socially we would be listened to, we have achieved a lot so far, we got about 75,000 Arab-Americans who declared heritage in 1990; we want 3 million.

On foreign policy, what has the influence of the ADC been?

There is a lot that has happened. The State Department, for instance, used to hear only the position of Arab leaders. They didn't listen to people; we meet now on a monthly basis with the state department to give them our positions on say the closure of the West Bank and Gaza - this is against international law, this is mass punishment, this is not acceptable. So we attract the attention of the State Department and the President. They never heard a protest except coming from Arab countries and Arab leaders. Now Arab-Americans are the grass roots who are asking them to formulate their policies. Aid to Israel, aid to Palestine, aid to Jordan, travel ban to Lebanon, all these are issues that we are taking with the administration to formulate a policy. We are now countering the Jewish lobby in telling (the administration) what we as Arab-Americans want (US) foreign policies to be for the Arab world. ■

Women's rights are essential for development

By Oronb Al Abed
Special to The Star

AS PART of the efforts of The National Environmental Information and Education Program (NEIEP) for the promotion of environmental awareness, the Jordan Environment Society and Friedrich Naumann Foundation have just organized a two-day seminar at the Regency Hotel. The seminar, entitled "The Beijing Women's Conference and its Repercussion on Jordan" aimed at promoting the role of women and enhancing their participation in sustainable development by increasing their productivity, providing and expanding their means of education and family health care, and promoting equal opportunity. These subjects provided the basis for discussion between the participants that included representatives from women's organizations, NGO's, academic institutions, international agencies, political parties and professional unions. It tackled certain women's issues that focused on the conditions of women world-wide and their fight for their rights.

"We have just started to unite the efforts of women's movements in Jordan which is necessary to tackle the problem of rights from the roots," said Buthaina Jandaneh, president of the Professional and Vocational Women's Club. The women's movement is acting worldwide to stop the violation of women's rights and to achieve equality with men. But participants were at pains to point out that what they mean by equality is only their fair share and not absolute equality with men. "Whenever there is social change their will be always a conflict, but this conflict, especially between men and women, is passive and handled in a democratic manner," said Asma Khader the president of the Union of Jordanian Women. But participants differed on the current status and conditions of women in Jordan.

"I feel that the condition of women has largely improved within the customs and traditions of our culture," said lawyer Taghreed Hikmat from The Jordanian National Congress of Women Committees (JNCW). "However we can't deny that there are remote areas where women need to be educated in the legal and health fields."

The women's movement is intensifying its effort to educate women about their rights and to teach them basic concepts like liberty and equality. The JNCW, which was initiated by HRH Princess Basma, is applying a work schedule all over the country, and is seeking to implement the resolutions of the Beijing Conference. The JNCW, as a semi-governmental organization, tries to coordinate the efforts of all governmental organizations and NGOs that are concerned with women's conditions. "Educating rural women is indispensable because they do not know their rights," said Ruby Asad from the National Committee of Agriculture. "Because of their direct relationship to the land, rural women have to know what types of insecticides to use because of their potential harmful effects on the environment," she added.

But these questions have come up at conferences year after year. Women, particularly in Jordan, have yet to define their rights on working practices and wages and other important issues. Unlike the West, these subjects are still undeveloped in this country, something that was demonstrated in the seminar. Asma Khader appealed to participants to discuss these issues. "We have progressed a lot on women's demands as compared with the past, nevertheless, there are numerous problems yet to be solved," she told The Star.

"In the recent debate on the budget, no one even dared to call for allocation of funds to improve the condition and status of women," Khader added.

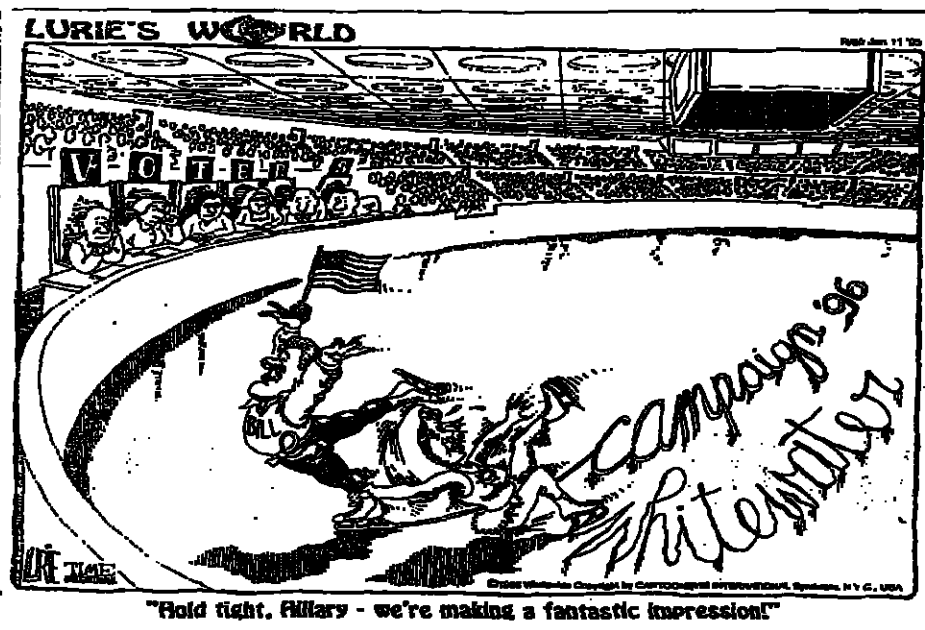
Women are highly important in the family unit, yet without education, they cannot perform their duties effectively and can become a burden on the economy since they constitute half the population.

Poverty is seen as directly related to these issues, a fact widely acknowledged during the Beijing conference. The role of women in the development process is seen as crucial. Health, violence, armed conflict and job discrimination were other topics that were discussed at the seminar. Participants stressed that governmental bodies and NGOs must cooperate to be able to create a more effective environment for the development of women and their contribution to society. ■

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Our Say...

Israel must check its extremists

PALESTINIANS WILL be heading to the polls Saturday in the first public elections in their history, thanks to the PLO and Israel's historic accord of 1994 and the subsequent agreements on the redeployment of the Israeli army. More than 1.3 million eligible voters will elect 88 members to the legislative council in 16 districts. A separate poll for the post of president will also take place. Mr Arafat and his Fatah movement are expected to sweep these elections especially that Hamas and other opposition factions are boycotting the polls.

To be carried out under international supervision, the elections are expected to be fair in spite of some irregularities that took place in the days preceding the voting date. The PNA shall cement its legitimacy as a result of these elections, giving it a clear mandate to continue the negotiation process with Israel, especially with regard to the future of Jerusalem.

The elections represent an important symbolic achievement for the Palestinian people. Regardless of what critics have to say about the Oslo agreements and the Palestinian-Israeli accords, the fact of the matter is that the Palestinian state is in its embryonic stage and no force can stop that. It is the culmination of decades of struggle starting with the Arab-Israeli wars, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the break out of the Palestinian Intifada in 1988, the Gulf War in 1990-91 and Israel's recognition of the PLO in 1992, as well as the start of the Madrid Middle East peace conference.

The election of a legislative body and a president should lay the foundations of a modern state in the liberated Palestinian territories. It should give confidence to Palestinians, both inside the territories and in the diaspora, about their future. But most importantly, it should give a clear signal that the future Palestinian state will be a democratic one worthy of the struggle and sacrifice of scores of Palestinians.

But for this unique experiment to succeed, Israel must keep its word and commitments to the Palestinian people. Those in Israel who rise above the narrow-minded cries of fanatics and radicals realize that it is in Israel's best interest to have a moderate and democratic Palestinian state as a neighbor. We believe Prime Minister Shimon Peres is sincere about honoring his country's commitments. But we fear that the wave of extremism that is taking hold in Israel could threaten peace between the Palestinians and Israel. Those same extremists who supported Yitzhak Rabin's killer will not hesitate to disrupt Palestinian elections and derail the peace process.

That's why Mr Peres, and all Israelis who support peace in the Middle East, must come out and make sure that Palestinians go to the polls, whether in Jerusalem, Nablus or Hebron, to vote peacefully and openly. Just as Mr Arafat is bound by his agreement with Israel to control the extremists in his camp, Mr Peres will be held by the same agreements to stem the tide of extremism in his own camp. Extremism, regardless of its origin, must not be allowed to take peace as a hostage.

Letters to the Editor

Learning about Jordan

Dear Sir,
I have just made my first visit to your website and found it both informative and enjoyable. I was very impressed with the tone of concern for economic progress in your country and your clear and informative articles. I look forward to future visits to your publication, which is a welcome opportunity for me to learn more about Jordan.

David J. Crook
Crook.djc@epiz.net, Internet

Thank you for the quality

Dear Sir,
I'm a Jewish American. I have been reading your weekly online for almost two months now. Your quality and courage are admirable! I admire your effort to assert your right to free press, which helps promote democracy. The quality and intelligence of your writing reminds me of the New Yorker. And I benefit from reading freely-spoken, true, intelligent, and diverse Arab perspectives on the issues of the area. Thank you!

Perry P. Zuckerman
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The Star
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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Palestinian Council elections

Politics for the new era

By Awmi Abu Ghosh
Star Staff Writer

ONLY TWO days separate the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza from going to the polls to publicly elect their self-rule representatives. About 17 political parties with nearly 676 candidates, in 16 electoral districts are contesting for the 88-seat council and the post of PNA president. On average, 7-8 candidates are standing for one seat.

Such zeal has its own merit. Though it is not time to dwell on its implications for Palestinian society, one can take the world's interest in monitoring these elections as evidence of their importance. Peace in the Middle East, and justice for resolving the Palestinian issue have been sought by many a nation. However, politics is never judged by ideals. Tactics have always been the workable mechanisms to define solutions within prevalent balances. Of no less importance in this regard is the fact that the tactics of the weakest side are based on its awareness of its own long-term objectives, and on what serves them within the temporary circumstances of negotiations.

Having said that, one can logically say that while Oslo I can be accepted, Oslo II (or the Taba Accord) has undermined the tactics of Palestinian negotiators with the Israelis. Oslo I, for instance, provides for the redeployment of the Israeli occupation forces from the West Bank. What is going on under Oslo II is a different case. Those who accepted Oslo II have their own calculations, which are distanced from the Palestinian national interest.

Apart from their view of democracy, the seemingly-free elections in the PNA areas are based on power politics. The Fatah-dominated PNA is using all means to impose itself at the expense of other rival forces and movements, and the well-known popular independence.

It is the right of any Palest-

inian political organization to have access to any post in the self-rule government. But it is entirely undemocratic to exploit the current governance of the PNA by a particular organization in the service of its own interest. This is the case in radio and TV where opposition candidates are denied their share of campaign coverage. And this was the case of the newspaper editor who did not abide by Mr Arafat's directives.

PNA leaders are stereotypes of distinct Arab political environments, and have come from countries where democracy in its true sense is absent, whereas the rival forces inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip belong to a different political culture. They have been subjected to Israeli occupation and oppression on the one hand, and experienced another nature democracy in Israel on the other.

Hence, the current political controversy in the PNA areas is not only based on different approaches of achieving as

much justice as possible to the Palestinians, but as to who would best realize that for the Palestinian people and how.

Fatah candidates propagate, in their election campaigns, that national independence and the establishment of the Palestinian state is at hand, though they know very well, as signatories to the Oslo II, that this is far-fetched. Of course, this is what the ordinary man in the street wants. But do the monitors and observers of the elections coming from all over the world believe that?

Though the other political parties, movements, and candidates also have the setting up of an independent Palestinian state as their objective, they do not see this as forthcoming because of the signed agreements with Israel. Therefore, they have concentrated in their programs in the election campaigns on the tasks and duties of the coming council for the final solution of the Palestinian cause, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, Jewish settlements in the PNA areas, and border and

water resources. In other words, these politically-involved Palestinians oppose the Fatah-dominated negotiations with the Israelis, and want the coming representative body to set right the demands and interests of the Palestinian people inside and outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Foreign observers clearly notice the difference in the programs of candidates, but, they should not compare the situation with election times in their own countries.

Democracy doesn't mean simply a free choice as these observers realize, for their countries have taken almost 200 years to settle this issue. Under the pressures of the 'prerogatives' of the new world order, they may take this form of democracy as acceptable. However, it would be so only in political terms and not in the balance of forces, and not in the terms of the more than half a century of oppression which the Palestinian have been subjected to.

These foreign observers, who have rightfully defended the right of free expression of an editor and a human rights activist, must also have the obligation of observing the right of a people to self-determination and statehood.

It is clear to these observers and the world that the Israelis, under the Taba Accord, continue to believe that the agreements they have signed with the Palestinians are no more than self-rule. That is, Israel will have the upper hand in any exercise of any gesture of independence hinted at by the elected body or the PNA. But this is not the maxim of defusing the conflict in the Middle East.

So many crucial aspects for a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are still pending, while the Israelis continue to try and impose a status quo in the PNA areas. The universal support of the Palestinian people needs now to assume a genuine political dimension.



Syria-Israel talks

A problem of perception

By Robin Wright
LA Times-Washington Post
News Service

JERUSALEM—Talks between Syria and Israel, the final and toughest part of the Middle East peace process, appear to be getting off to an uneven start. But the problem may lie more in perception than reality, it is claimed.

Last Friday, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher heralded his talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad as crossing an important threshold. Yet he hadn't even briefed Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres before Israeli commentators and officials began calling his 16th peace shuttle as "disappointing."

When Christopher boarded his plane to fly home, the Israeli media reported that the failure of his peace mission to produce a major breakthrough either should or would force early Israeli elections.

"If we see that the negotiations with the Syrians do not soon lead us anywhere, then early elections are a must. Without peace with Syria, this (Labor) government has, in effect, reached the end of its usefulness and should go to the people," said Labor Party General Secretary Nissim Zivili.

The gloom in Israel flies in the face of important evidence, US officials contend. "Israel and Syria are now engaged in a more meaningful dialogue than they have been at any time in these negotiations," Christopher said.

It is just the opposite of "disappointed," he added. US mediators still believe that a deal before 29 October, the date by which Israel must hold elections, is more than just a possibility. The elections could then double as the referendum on terms of peace promised by the Labor government.

Members of the Israeli team also concede that the trip produced a tangible three-point agreement on just how comprehensive this final leg of the peace process will be. It will include most, if not all, of the rest of the 22-nation Arab League.

A formal ending of the overall Arab-Israeli conflict is important to Israel and may lessen the need for some of the disputed security measures on the Golan Heights, the strategic territory captured during the 1967 war that is the centerpiece of a peace deal. It also acknowledges Syria's leadership in the Arab world. It will feature a US-led campaign to

create political and economic alliances between Israel and the Arab world, which could be important in widening the role, influence and trade of both. And it will be independent of other peace tracks, freeing both sides most notably from any future glitches on the Palestinian track over sensitive issues such as sovereignty and Jerusalem that are still to be settled.

The package creates a foundation around which the two parties, who have been at war for half a century, can pursue the specifics of swapping the Golan Heights for peace, US officials say.

The gap in perceptions has been caused mainly by expectations, which have become so high since the moribund effort was revived last month that key players are disappointed with anything short of major agreements. It is also a function of differences in style.

"One month ago we thought if Peres came in with a big burst, then Assad would respond with a big burst," an Israeli mediator said. What you're seeing now is a reaction to the early, overly optimistic assessments.



"Now we have to learn to accept incremental progress," he added.

Assad, who is arguably the most cautious of the Arab world's diverse leaders, was never expected to jump on anyone's bandwagon. But he fully understands the dynamics of time in the current effort, US mediators contend.

The Israeli government is under pressure in part because the calendar of impending events is not on its side—one of the reasons for talk of elections as soon as 4 June.

The anti-peace movement is gearing up again after a period of inactivity following the 4 November assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist opposed

to peace.

Since Rabin's assassination, Peres' move toward peace with Syria has won majority support. But the drama of the impending trial of Yigal Amir, Rabin's confessed assassin, is likely to be fairly short-lived, and emotions stirred by the national trauma may soon dissipate.

"Syria rarely moves swiftly on anything... and the Israelis know that. Having said that, however, Damascus has made serious strides over the past month," a US official said.

"I think the Israeli reaction reflects its own situation as much as what came out of this mission."



"Good news... with the fresh horse we'll be moving my second now!"

Middle East Beat

by
Khairi Janbek

More on Eritrea

Readers responded to Khairi Janbek's column of 29 December. These letters were received on the Internet:

Bias and belligerency
Dear Sir,
I read with sadness your article of 29 December on the Eritrean-Yemeni conflict over the Hanish Islands. From a paper such as yours that purports (or does it) to be enlightened and knowledgeable, one would not have expected such biased and totally belligerent tone, uncharacteristic of the Jordanian nation and people.

Instead of trying to cool matters by urging the parties to sit and negotiate, the writer went ballistic about the so-called "weak" Arab Nation. This, of course, betrayed the writer's true motive of crashing weak Eritrea, an "enemy of the Arab nation", and thus make it a potent example to others.

Needless to say, I am afraid the writer is in search of a weaker perceived "Arab foe." The Eritreans are not the enemies of their Arab brothers and sister. And the Eritreans appreciate whatever assistance they received from the Arab world/people during the liberation struggle, as they surely do from any other place. But receiving such assistance does not make the Eritrean national movement a creation of the Arabs or anybody else—unless of course the people who think so are living in myth, just like the writer of the above mentioned article. And certainly, they will not part lying down when claims are made on their land.

Hopefully, in more rational time, you will examine what the Eritrean leadership and people are saying about the whole matter. It is not because they do not have a bottle of "Arab" support behind them, but they realize fully well that the Yemenis are our brothers and sisters and we have to live together in harmony once this acrimonious incident is over. I am afraid this may be disappointing to the writer of the article who would like to crash small "Frankenstein" Eritrea as an example to Iran and others.

Let's hope, next time your writer will show a little less rash to judgment and condemnation more willingness to be patient to examine the relevant fact.

Dr Yacob Fisseha
Michigan State University
21247YF@ism.cmu.edu, Internet

Not an Arab creation

Dear Sir,
Write facts and opinion not only baseless, pointless opinions. I'm talking about the editorial written about the Eritrean and Yemeni conflict. The author writes that after all this years of Arabian help Eritrea is attacking it's creators. That is simply not true. The only help Eritrea got from most Arab states is mass deportations of refugees. If an Arab country didn't help Ethiopia that would have been considered a help. But most Arab nations gave millions of dollars, and arms to Ethiopia through which Eritreans were to be killed. So, if the writer understands the meaning of the word "help" he should've checked out history and get to know what he was to talk about.

Petros, Seattle.
petros@u.washington.edu.

Apology requested

Dear Sir,
I'm sure your article does NOT reflect the opinion of Jordanians. The article referred to Eritrean freedom fighters as... "a former rag tag army" and the nation of Eritrea as "a Frankenstein created by the Arab world." Surely, Jordan does not see the people of Eritrea in this light. I feel an apology is in order for such inflammatory reporting on your part. Jordanians can play a major role in this dispute by offering help negotiate this matter in a constructive and fair manner.

Roy Squires
eris@eris.net

JANUARY 1996

A special section offering
fresh perspective on
global issues prepared for

The Star

THE WORLD PAPER

PRINTED IN FIVE LANGUAGES
ON FIVE CONTINENTS

Global warming absorbs premiums as well as trapping heat

Insurance industry hit by a storm front

Weather forecasts are famously inaccurate. So why believe that human activity is changing our climate? Many people in many countries do not. But the world's insurance industry, hit with billions of dollars in losses, is beginning to side with the believers

By George Palmer

IN LIFE, SO THE SAYING goes, there are only two certainties: death and taxes. Add a third: natural catastrophes that, like the Grim Reaper, strike without warning. Lives are lost, people injured, property destroyed, crops ruined, hopes dashed.

Hurricanes and tornadoes; droughts and floods; fires, hail, ice and snow. The vagaries of weather, climate change and the earthquake's tremor are intensively studied by governments, scientists and the world's US\$1.41 trillion insurance industry. The mysterious forces that change the earth's climate—and mankind's role in those changes—may one day be understood.

The omens are not exactly encouraging. Theories about the role human activities play in changing the world's climate are fiercely debated. Developing countries see them as rationales for limiting their economic growth. Yet the evidence supporting climatic change seems to be mounting.

According to the Insurance Services Office Inc. (ISO), four of the five most severe catastrophes in the 42 years to 1992 have been visited on the Americas since 1989. In that year Hurricane Hugo ran up insurance losses of \$3 billion. Five times worse was Hurricane Andrew in 1992, resulting in losses of \$15.5 billion. Had it hit Miami instead of Homestead, Florida, losses could have exceeded \$40 billion. Even so, it put seven insurers into insolvency. That

same year Hurricane Iniki left insured losses of \$1.6 billion in its wake and put Hawaii's largest insurer out of business. Had it struck Honolulu instead of Kauai, the bill would have been \$15 billion.

According to the Swiss Reinsurance Company, the Mississippi-Missouri flood during the summer of 1993 killed 49, left 66,000 homeless, caused \$5 billion of property damage, \$7 billion of crop failures and put 80,000 square kilometers of land under water. The following year there were severe storms

in January and April: cost \$1.5 billion. This year Hurricane Opal cost \$2.1 billion; a hail-storm in Texas \$1.1 billion; and Hurricane Marilyn left the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico with claims running to \$875 million.

On top of those pay-outs, over the past 10 years US government help to disaster-struck communities amounted to another \$50 billion.

Is there a pattern? Can these storms, floods and hurricanes be predicted? Do they run in cycles?

Dr Gerry Bell, a meteorologist with the Climate Prediction Center of the US National Weather Service, believes one of the primary causes of intense hurricane activity is a natural phenomenon. Known as El Niño, it is a periodic warming of the ocean in the central and east central equatorial Pacific that shifts strong tropical thunderstorm activity from Indonesia to that part of the Pacific. The warming affects the mean vertical wind shear and when that becomes weaker than normal, hurricanes

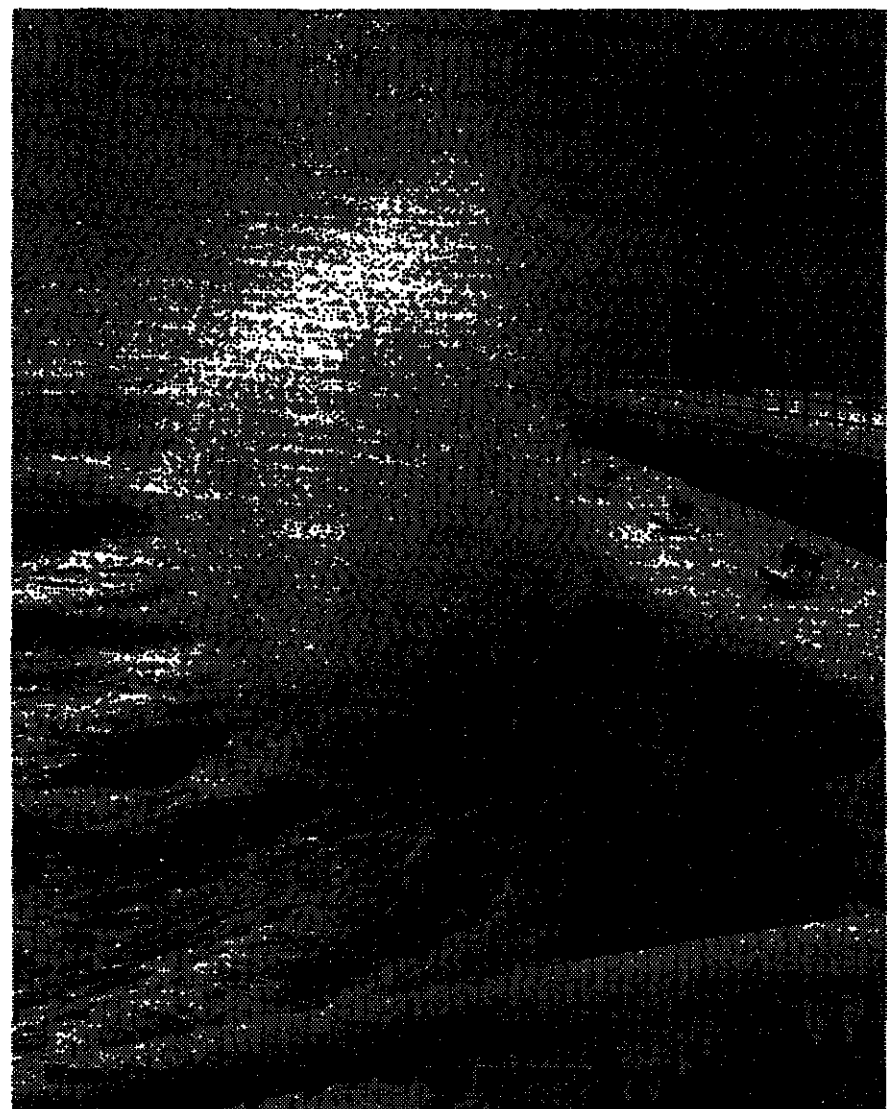
strengthen and multiply. This year the wind shear was weaker than normal and there were 11 hurricanes compared with 13 for the previous four years combined.

It's also been found that periods of intense hurricane activity correlate with alternating two-decade periods of comparatively wet cycles (more severe hurricanes) and dry cycles (fewer) in the semi-arid sub-Saharan region of West Africa.

Then there's a long-term global warming trend that seems to be aggravated by the accumulation of "greenhouse" gases, chiefly carbon dioxide from burning hydrocarbons, that trap solar heat. As the surface temperature of sea water rises above 80 degrees Fahrenheit, the area of warm water large enough to produce hurricanes grows bigger—by over 16 percent over the past 20 years. The result: longer hurricane seasons and more intense storms.

A study by Travelers Corp., a Hartford Connecticut-based insurer, suggests that just a 0.9 degree increase in average global temperature by 2010 would be enough to result in stronger winds, a third more hurricanes hitting the US coast, a three-week extension of the hurricane season and a 30 percent rise in US catastrophic losses.

As oceans warm and polar ice melts, the sea level rises and coastal flooding increases. Along the US Atlantic coast the sea level has risen a foot and is now at its highest for 5,000 years. Over the next 20 years it is expected to rise another 5.7-7.7 inches according to the



University of Maryland's Laboratory for Coastal Research.

So beaches will continue to erode exposing \$2 trillion of insured property along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts to damage. In the US half the population lives within 50 miles of a coastline. That's worrying enough. It could be much worse for the 240,000 inhabitants of the Maldives, 1,192 tiny islands in the Indian Ocean that average only one meter above sea level. They could disappear under water by mid-21st century.

Other researchers seeking explanations for climatic change focus on solar activity. They have found an 11-year pattern of low-pressure systems and winter storms over the North Atlantic that corresponds with the solar cycle. Shifts in weather patterns, they suggest, are linked to variations in the intensity of solar ultraviolet radiation. Ultraviolet rays are absorbed by stratospheric ozone, affect its temperature and create additional ozone. A hotter stratosphere changes the way huge atmospheric

waves are generated, thereby affecting cloud cover, winds and temperature at the earth's surface.

Not all scientists accept this hypothesis. Others suggest it's not ultra violet light but charged particles blowing from the sun past the earth that change the amount of cloud cover and thereby the climate over long periods.

Whatever the cause or causes of climatic change, they disturb the established rhythm of weather patterns and their predictability. The resulting bunching of catastrophes threaten the ability of the global insurance industry to settle claims expeditiously. In addition, the sudden surge in demand for materials and labor raises reconstruction costs above expected levels.

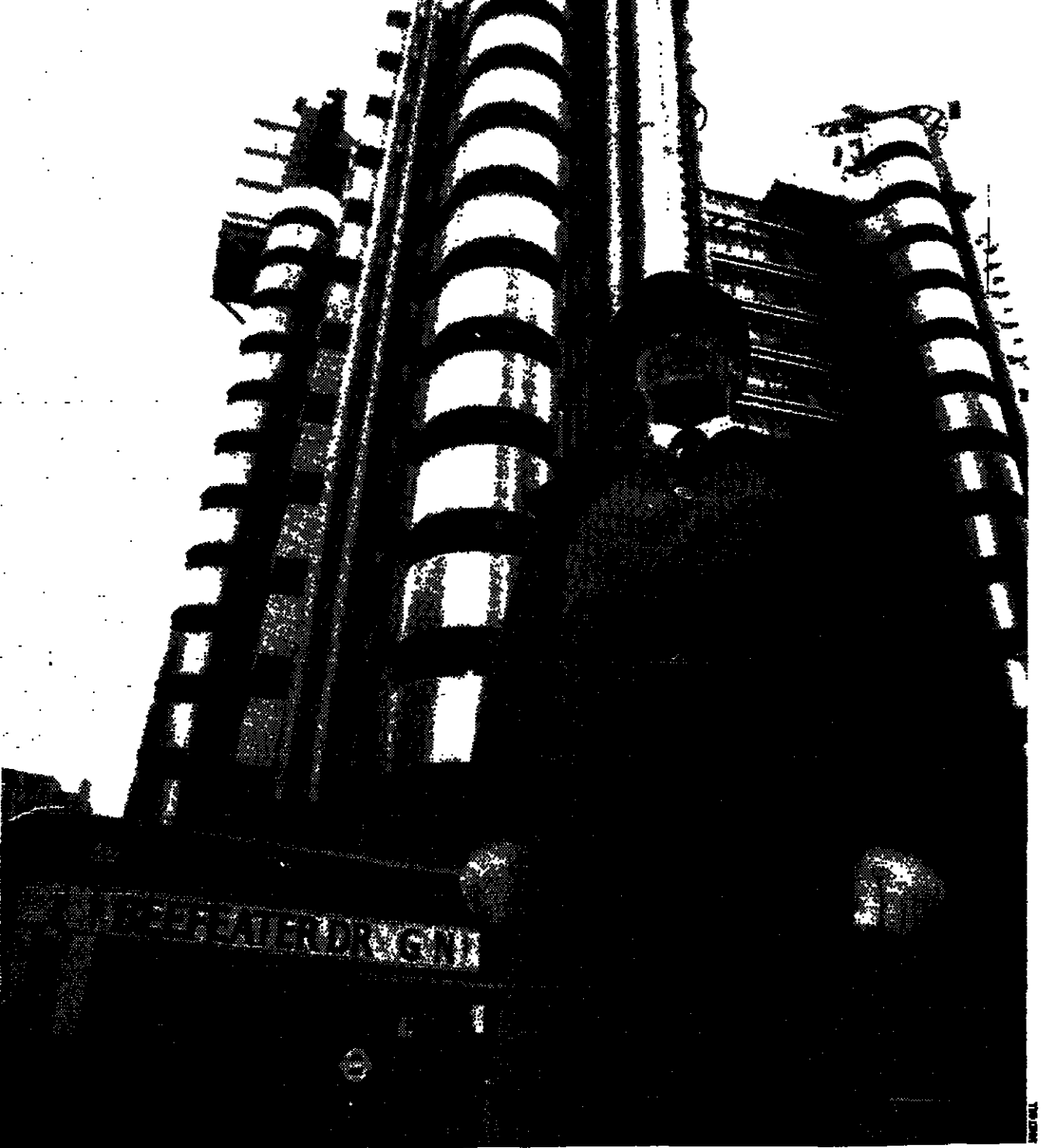
For its part, the insurance industry has added \$4.1 billion of reinsurance capacity. It is also limiting over-concentrated exposure in hurricane-prone (and earthquake-prone) areas. Computer programs have been developed to improve information systems for assessing underwriting risks and tracking the accumulation of exposure. More accurate estimates of potential catastrophe loss are achieved by linking long-term natural disaster information with current demographic information.

However, demographics are not reassuring. In the US in 1960 45 million people lived in hurricane-prone coastal areas. In 1990 there were 64 million. By 2010 the figure is expected to reach 73 million. Other countries are experiencing similar trends.

Despite the world insurance industry's \$160 billion in reserves, global warming could result in catastrophes that could bankrupt it. As risks increase, the cost of covering them obviously rises too, despite efforts to more accurately measure them. □

GEORGE PALMER, A FORMER EDITOR OF THE Financial Mail IN SOUTH AFRICA, WRITES FROM LOS ANGELES ON FINANCIAL ISSUES.

A wind-proof structure? The Lloyd's Building in London home to an insurer that is still recovering from a series of natural and human disasters



Battered British insurance giant showing signs of recovery

But 'long tail' still wags Lloyd's of London

By Alex Brummer

THE STORMS THAT raged through Europe and the Americas during the 1980s and 1990s did damage totalling billions of dollars.

Among the things in the path of these storms was Lloyd's of London, perhaps the insurance world's most widely recognized name.

In the course of several horrendous years, marked by a series of natural and manmade disasters ranging from Hurricane Hugo to the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the accumulated losses of the London insurance market have climbed to US\$12 billion. Claims related to policies covering pollution and asbestos are still being resolved—the infamous "long tail"—are still wreaking havoc among the individual investors, or Names, whose personal wealth underpinned Lloyd's for three centuries.

Today, it is finally possible to believe that Lloyd's is far enough along the road to recovery to remain a significant factor in the global insurance industry.

However, the restructured and reformed Lloyd's that emerges will be a very different creature from the free-wheeling, highly entrepreneurial and relatively unregulated market which shaped its character for three centuries. What is not clear is whether the new Lloyd's, when it is up and running, will be as innovative an insurance market as its predecessor; an innovativeness that gave the City of London and the commercial insurance companies based there an edge in the competitive area of global insurance services.

The new Lloyd's will be much more focused. It will be much more professional. And its underwriting capacity will be provided through corporate ve-

hicles, with limited liability, rather than the Names whose unlimited liability was the backbone of the market. As it turns out, this change may not be as significant as it appears. When push came to shove, there was a natural limit to the liability—as the current lawsuits prove, the market could not bankrupt the Names with impunity.

But Lloyd's is still a ways from being back on its feet. The recovery schedule was given a jolt two months ago when the architect of many of the reforms, Peter Middleton, suddenly decided to step down from his post and take on a more lucrative job as head of investment bank Salomon Brothers' European operations. By leaving so suddenly, Middleton has jeopardized the better relations Lloyd's had built up with the loss-making Names and the momentum for external, independent regulation of the market—something Middleton himself deemed vital to restoring confidence in Lloyd's at home and abroad.

For the reorganization of Lloyd's to be successful, several separate but related developments need to take place. Most importantly, the provisional settlement negotiated by Middleton with the rebellious Names—who have filed thousands of lawsuits against the insurance market—has to be concluded. Under the terms of this settlement, the Names would drop their lawsuits in return for some \$4 billion. It was originally expected that this settlement would be concluded by the end of 1995. Now, the new chief executive,

▶ LONG TAIL PAGE 2

Solutions favored by environmental groups seen as simplistic

Japanese industry puts a premium on more income

By Mutsuho Kawashima

IT WAS A TYPHOON that never hit which really made Japanese insurers sit up and think about climate change.

Typhoon 12 arrived off the Japanese coast in the summer of 1995, and for a period it looked as if it would slam into metropolitan Tokyo. Though the storm passed offshore, Japanese insurance companies were left to ponder their costs if Tokyo had been hit. They also started to consider the trend of increasingly strong typhoons that has emerged in the past decade.

According to most estimates, if Typhoon 12 had swept through Tokyo, the bill for non-life insurers would have totaled a trillion yen. If the typhoon succeeded in breaching the banks of the Tone River north of Tokyo, the flooding could have displaced over one and a half million people, covered 555

REPORTING FROM TOKYO

square miles and pushed the bill to an unprecedented 7 trillion yen. In either case, Japan's non-life insurance industry would have faced bankruptcy.

They had already suffered a record-setting blow in 1991, when Typhoon 19 came ashore on September 27 and, in one night, left insurers with a bill that eventually totaled 560 billion yen. That bill was 17 times larger than the previous record, set the year before by another typhoon.

What especially concerns insurers is the growing frequency and intensity of the typhoons. Historically, a "mega-typhoon" hit Japan once every 30 to 40 years; in recent years that average has fallen to once every eight years. There has also been a 20 percent increase in the average intensity of these storms.

The cause of this change, most insurers agree, is global warming. Big companies are starting to alert government officials to the phenomenon, though to date their motivation is higher premiums rather than a change in the way the world does business.

International environmental groups have been warning insurers for some time that the build-up of "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere, and the resulting change in climate, would come back to haunt them. Groups like Greenpeace and the Worldwatch Institute have been urging the insurance companies to use their investment portfolios to pressure manufacturing companies for a reduction in their output of carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases.

According to Tokyo Marine, Japan's largest non-life insurance company, Japanese insurers generally do not hold a sufficiently large share of any one company to be able, as an institutional investor, to impose their will. Global warming, they believe, will not be solved by Greenpeace's simple-minded approach.

Climate change, however, cannot be ignored. One likely response, according to Tokyo Marine, is to stop selling disaster insurance or withdraw from particularly vulnerable markets. This is the direction some US insurers have taken in the wake of Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Currently, the main strategy is to gather sufficient information about typhoons and their likely paths in order to justify premium increases. Following Typhoon 19, the industry established a private research group, comprised of university experts and officials from relevant government ministries such as the Ministry of Construction, and tried to persuade the government to approve increased premiums. They secured a 7 percent increase, which is still low in light of possible losses from typhoons.

Working against this strategy is a long-term trend of decreasing premiums. In Japan, insurance for typhoon-related damage is tied to coverage for fires. Since World War II, improved fire-fighting technology has helped

lower those premiums. The public, now used to this happy state of affairs, is likely to resist any sharp increases—a political reality the government is aware of.

Japanese insurers are now considering a new strategy. By working with their US counterparts, they hope to give added weight to their arguments that, by improving the industry's ability to pay through premium increases, their respective governments will be less exposed to the need for expensive emergency aid packages. In the long run, they hope that by making the US and Japanese governments more and more worried about the dangers of global warming and changing weather, they can create a better environment for higher premiums. □

MUTSUHO KAWASHIMA IS FOREIGN AFFAIRS EDITOR FOR *The Weekly Tokyo Keizai* IN TOKYO.

Environmentalists gaining an unlikely ally

A new force enters the climate fray

By Christopher Flavin

WHEN ENVIRONMENTAL leaders from more than 120 countries met in Berlin in March 1995 for the first Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, they were greeted by an April snowstorm. The inauspicious spring blizzard seemed a fitting backdrop to a chilly and contentious session, pitting rich nations against poor ones, heavy carbon emitters against less carbon-intensive nations, and small island states against countries that feel less vulnerable.

Yet even as negotiators labored over mind-numbing issues such as "adequacy of commitments" and "joint implementation," the urgency of the climate threat was being heightened by new scientific studies. As with many threats, this one prompted a new confluence of political forces, including a potent newcomer: the insurance industry.

In Berlin, this force began to assert itself. A seminar on the insurance implications of climate change preceded the official conference, and executives from leading European insurers such as Munich Re and Lloyd's of London stayed on to observe the proceedings. Their participation reflects the fact that as disaster claims mounted in the early 1990s, insurance executives began to consider their vulnerability to global warming.

The entry of the insurance industry into the debate on climate change is a potential watershed. As a business on the front lines of society's most risky activities, the insurance industry has a century-long tradition of spurring important social policy changes to help reduce those risks. In the United States, for example, the industry's experience with fire-related claims led it to point out that stricter building codes could reduce the frequency of fires. Insurers then played a leading role in lobbying governments to adopt such codes.

Similarly, they have fought since the early seventies for tougher safety standards for automobiles—often battling directly with auto industry lobbyists. The resulting regulations on crash-resistant bumpers, seatbelts, and airbags

LONG TAIL

Continued from page 1

Ron Sandler, is saying that it will take more money (another \$300 million) before things are settled later this year.

A second reform that must be fully implemented is the establishment of Equitas, a reinsurance company which is intended to take responsibility for the so-called "long tail": the billions of dollars of unresolved asbestos and pollution claims in the United States. And sorting out Equitas has also not proved easy.

The person hired to do that job, Heidi Hutter, has indicated she will leave soon. It was Hutter who was responsible for untangling the mess left behind by the old Lloyd's, a mess that includes the outcomes of "Superfund" environmental clean-up rulings in the US and the unscrambling of some 100,000 reinsurance contracts taken out by Lloyd's underwriters to protect themselves.

With a settlement between the Names and the market in place, and the destabilizing environmental and reinsurance contracts ring-fenced within the Equitas fund, Sandler and the Lloyd's Council will be able to create the new Lloyd's. This new market will be largely funded by corporate capital and Names whose syndicates will be reorganized into corporate vehicles with limited liability. Members of this

new Lloyd's will help discharge the liabilities of the old Lloyd's, collected in Equitas, through such mechanisms as a surcharge on premiums.

On the financial front, the reconstruction of Lloyd's has been helped by the fact that the insurance cycle has moved in its favor since 1992. How favorable is still unclear because of the three-year lag created by Lloyd's antiquated accounting system. This will be replaced by a more transparent one-year system in the new Lloyd's.

The outlines of a newly financed and better regulated market can be seen in the future Lloyd's has plotted for itself. But with the loss of unlimited liability and the old, laissez faire style, there may also be some shrinkage of capacity and loss of competitive advantage. □

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Godzilla may have been replaced by typhoons as the stuff of nightmares for Japanese insurers



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WEATHER-RELATED DISASTERS 1989-1995

Disaster	Location	Date	Deaths	Estimated Damages
Windstorm Daria	Europe	Jan. '90	90	4.6
Unnamed Cyclone	Bangladesh	May '91	140,000	3
Flood	China	Summer '91	3,074	15
Typhoon Mirille	Japan	Sept. '91	62	6
Hurricane Andrew	North America	August '92	74	30
Floods	Pakistan	Sept. '92	2,000	1
Winterstorm	North America	March '93	246	5
Mississippi Floods	North America	Summer '93	41	12
Winter Damage	North America	Jan. '94	170	4
Flood Floods	China	Spring '94	1,846	7.8
Flood	Italy	Nov. '94	64	9.3
Winter Floods	North America	Jan./Feb. '95	28	3.5
And some unrelated to weather...				
Manji Earthquake	NW Iran	Jun. '90	50,000	8
Unzen Volcano	Japan	Nov. '90	43	1.1
Pinatubo Volcano	Philippines	Jun. '91	600	1
Maharashtra Earthq.	South India	Sept. '93	22,000	7
Northridge Earthq.	California, US	Jan. '94	61	20
Great Hanshin Earthq.	Kobe, Japan	Jan. '95	5,470	400

Source: Worldwatch Institute and various sources. Billion dollars.

holders vulnerable to truly disastrous consequences." A growing number of insurance executives believe that they are already on the front lines of the climate problem: If climatic extremes increase the frequency of weather-related disasters, the insurance industry will be expected to absorb the resulting financial shocks. In a follow-up report on the Berlin conference, a representative of the Lloyd's insurance company said, "It is thus probable that the insurance industry is going to have to take some initiatives by itself, or along with the banking industry."

The dilemma for insurance companies is that their rates and coverage policies have always been based on the law of averages. In the case of weather-related coverage, they look to past climate trends and assume that over time, the frequency of catastrophes will stay the same. But in a world of rapidly changing and highly unpredictable weather trends, such calculations have to be thrown overboard.

Some industry experts believe that another "bad year" or two, or even a single catastrophic storm, could force major companies into bankruptcy. As a first step, many companies are reducing their exposure in coastal real estate (known as "shore-lining"), wildfire-prone regions, and valleys where floods are possible.

The trend is particularly clear in areas such as the Caribbean. In the past, insurance has served as a buffer against extreme events, a buffer that would be even more important in a world of more frequent natural disasters. If the insurance industry solves its vulnerability problem by abandoning certain forms of protection, then either governments will have to step in as the insurer of last resort, or individual citizens will be forced to pay the price.

With this in mind, industry leaders such as Frank Nutter, President of the Reinsurance Association of America, have begun to argue that their industry should take a more direct role in the issue of global climate change. For example, Munich Re said in a 1993 report: "The imminent change in our climate makes speedy, radical countermeasures unavoidable."

Of course, talking about action and venturing into the unfamiliar arena of greenhouse policies are two different things. The insurance industry faces a formidable opponent in the fossil fuel lobby, and the struggle will be based on data, theories and observations that are often disputed. But if the insurance industry does not build on the momentum of Berlin, its future is likely to be stormy indeed. □

CHRISTOPHER FLAVIN IS A SENIOR RESEARCHER FOR THE US-BASED WORLDWATCH INSTITUTE AND CO-AUTHOR OF *Power Surge: Guide to the Coming Energy Revolution*.

Latin culture is invading the consciousness of people far removed from Spain and South America



Finding their way onto the heads of US presidents

Mobsters, presidents and ministers find use for Ecuador's Panama hat

By Arturo and Maureen Brigid González

WHEN A STRING OF JAUNTY male models strutted down the runways of the Paris fashion shows last summer, many wore on their heads the ultimate symbol of cool refinement: elegantly banded, finely woven Panama hats. Both Balmain and Kenzo selected traditional Panamas to emphasize the ease and elegance of their summer collections.

As the world approaches the 21st century, this venerable straw hat, dating back to the Spanish conquistadors, continues to dominate the world's hot-weather headgear. Straw for the hat—which despite its name actually comes from Ecuador—is grown, woven and crafted along the twisting Boulevard of the Volcanoes in the Andean highlands around the colonial city of Cuenca.

When Pizarro's armored conquerors first trooped into the Andes, they found the native Incas wearing straw *tequilas* and quickly realized there might be a market in Europe for this lightweight, hot-weather headgear. An early designer of the Panama hat was Francisco Delgado who, in the 1500s, took a group of local weavers to Ecuador's port city of Guayaquil and then to Peru in an effort to train more of the indigenous people to weave hats and build the new colony's export trade.

Eventually, the Ecuadorian hat trade coalesced around Cuenca, an isolated town in the Pucarámba valley high in the Andes. Villagers in the valleys around the city weave the straw during the week, then take their piles of work into town by truck and wait for it to be graded by Cuenca's demanding hatmakers. When they are paid, they head back into the hills to weave some more.

In Cuenca, the straws are trimmed, bleached in sodium sulfate and perox-

ide baths, some of them dyed, their brims pounded to soften them, then steamed into a variety of popular shapes. Their route to market is how they got to be known as Panamas.

Americans first encountered these distinctive *sombreros de paja toquilla* during the California Gold Rush. Many forty-niners traveled to California by sailing down to the east coast of Panama, crossing the narrow isthmus, then sailing up the Pacific coast to the gold fields. To ward off the tropical sun in Panama, many bought the local sun hat, which had migrated up from Ecuador. Thus the "Panama" hat.

It was in 1855 at the Paris World Exposition that the Panama made the leap from being just practical protection against the tropical sun to becoming a chic European fashion statement. King Napoleon III decided that he fancied the most expensive Panama on display, and once he started wearing it, *le tout monde* joined in. Many of Renoir's warm paintings of Parisians at picnics along the banks of the Seine show *les gentils hommes* wearing the very latest Ecuadorian straws.

The United States' flirtation with empire further extended the fame of the Panama. In 1898, the US went to war with Spain over the alleged Span-

ish destruction of the USS Maine in Havana harbor. US troops for the first time were going to war in the tropics, not only in Cuba but in Spain's other major overseas colony, the Philippines. Tropical uniforms had to be issued, and 50,000 Panama hats were ordered.

America's next great tropical adventure was the building of the Panama Canal. Construction crews found the Panama hat the perfect headgear for warding off sunstroke, and newsreel film and photographs of the men at work carried the image of the hat into homes and nickelodeons all across the United States.

When President Teddy Roosevelt went south to inspect the canal in 1906 wearing a curly-brimmed Panama, it was a sign that in terms of high fashion this hat was definitely in the ring. Each US President since Grover Cleveland has been ceremonially presented with a fine Panama by the Ecuadorian government.

The Panama hat even had a period as the official headgear of the Mob. Al Capone went into Alcatraz Prison wearing a fashionable Panama, and many of the hoods who emulated Big Al wore the same style. Ecuador's hatmakers still turn out a broad, snap-brimmed model called *El Capone*.

Many film heroes—Humphrey Bogart and Gary Cooper to name two—have played classic roles speaking their lines out from under the brim of a Panama hat. Winston Churchill, photographed painting a seascape in Cap Ferrat after World War II, has a Panama on his head. When Nikita Khrushchev arrived in Washington for a summit in 1964, his ill-fitting communist suit was topped off with a stylish Panama. ☐

ARTURO AND MAUREEN BRIGID GONZÁLEZ ARE FREELANCE WRITERS BASED IN FLORIDA.

Latin culture begins to assert itself

Something more than macho

As the financial press spent the 1970s and 1980s ridiculing Latin America's debt-ridden financial culture, its music, art, literature, language, clothing and food were staking a growing claim to the world's attention. Today, Latin American culture may be the region's most important export

By Daniel Samper

THE NUMBER OF Spanish words that have been incorporated into English and other languages gives an indication of the presence of the Hispanic culture on the international scene. Many of the words refer to subversive activities (*guerrilla*, *junta*, *bandolier*), or to the world of dubious ethics (*picaresque*, *Don Juan*, *peccadillo*, *desperado*), or to exotic things (*parakeet*, *maraca*, *papaya*, *toreador*, *picador*).

The best known words that have jumped to other languages are two pejorative terms: *macho* and *machismo*. Practically no artistic, philosophic or scientific terms come to mind.

Nevertheless, in the past few years we have seen different Spanish terms trickling into the world. Rather than referring to war or low life, they are expressions about music (*salsa*, *merengue*), food (*tapas*, *tortilla*) and literature (*Macondo*, *Borgian*). They reflect a community that has little to offer to the scientific vocabulary, but whose presence in popular culture can be perceived with increasing strength.

There are lots of examples:

► In Japan there is a band that sings and plays the joyful Caribbean *salsa*, even though the musicians don't speak Spanish and hence don't understand the lyrics they are singing. The first bullfighter has also surfaced.

► Many South Korean universities have *tunas*, groups of singing students that are traditional in Spanish colleges.

► One of the most successful singers in the United States is Gloria Estefan, of Cuban origin, who has popularized Latin American rhythms.

► In Russia, Turkey, Taiwan and other European and Asian countries, housewives are crazy about Latin American soap operas, which they see on local TV dubbed into their own language.

► Hollywood is producing many films

(like "Carlito's Way" and "Desperado") about Latin culture. A hero of this movement is the Spanish actor Antonio Banderas, whose looks have been imitated by many youngsters since at the Academy Awards ceremony he was declared the best looking man in the world.

► Two of the most famous tenors in the world—Plácido Domingo and José Carreras—are Spanish. But some people say that the best of the lot is Alfredo Kraus... also Spanish.

► Latin American writers have become prominent in the US market, to the point that Oscar Hijuelos, a New York Cuban, won the Pulitzer Prize with his novel, "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love," later translated into half a dozen languages.

The advance of Latin culture is also reflected by the spread of the Spanish language. It is estimated that more than

people who want to learn it as a second or third language. "In the 1980s there were about 21,000 Spanish teachers in the United States, but now that figure has almost doubled," says Juan R. Lora, a philology professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

The same phenomenon can be observed in other countries. In Japan, Spanish is taught in 110 universities, and in Sweden it is the most popular language after English. "If Spanish doesn't have as many students as English in the next few years, it will be due only to a shortage of teachers," says a professor at the University of Upsala.

The Spanish language brings with it a culture whose personality derives from a mixture of races and customs from four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. This mixture explains, for example, the attraction of *salsa*, a music born in the Caribbean

but raised and nurtured in New York. The complicated harmonies of *salsa* have quietly penetrated jazz and even the traditional gypsy *rumba*.

Latin culture is very imaginative when it comes to telling stories, as shown by the work of Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes, among others. The "magic realism" of García Márquez has extended its influence all

the way to India: Salman Rushdie says that García Márquez is his best teacher.

Popular culture, a vital force that is not well documented in history books, obviously recognizes the Hispanic influence. To find out how much of this influence will remain incorporated into the international social current, we may have to wait and consult the dictionaries of the future. ☐

DANIEL SAMPER, A COLOMBIAN WHO LIVES IN MADRID, IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF *The World Paper*.

Yankee invasion welcomed with open arms

Hispanic culture produced in US conquers Latin American audiences

By Carlos Castillo

IN THE GOOD old times, Latin American elites admired Elizabeth Taylor and Frank Sinatra as icons of American culture. Today, mass audiences in Mexico, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua celebrate Conchita Morales, Don Francisco and John Secada—stars of the new US Latin culture.

Ratings and profits are soaring as actors, singers and TV personalities of Spanish origin have become prime-time stars in the growing network of US Hispanic channels watched in Central and South America—all to the chagrin of the Latin American elite.

"The American culture is now being exported in Spanish with Chicanos, Cuban or Dominican accents to Latin audiences," laments Costa Rican writer Fabian Dobles. His Mexican colleague, Carlos Monsivais, agrees: "To get visibility and public recognition in our native countries, we must now appear on the 'Cristina' show on Univision (in the United States), because more than any other time, Latin intellectuals need a seal of approval from US television."

Dobles and Monsivais express the mood among traditional intellectuals and self-proclaimed "culture fighters" in Latin America, who see the spread of US Hispanic cable channels as the



Singing a mixture of traditional Mexican music and American pop, Selena's popularity spanned both sides of the US/Mexico border. She was shot in 1995

biggest threat so far to the region's identity and diversity.

To many, television is the key concern, mainly because shows made in the United States inevitably reflect the US public agenda. Media experts such as Muniz Sodre of Brazil say that shows like "Cristina," "Sábado Gigante" or

"Ocurrió Así" (all in Spanish but produced in the United States, some of them with Hispanic live audiences) cannot erase the cultural heritage of Latin America itself. "But these shows tend to fill the agenda of issues offered to public debate, so that local problems

► CONQUERS NEXT PAGE

CONQUERS

Continued from previous page

get slighted and aren't seen."

During the Cold War, US culture was seen in Latin America as a political weapon. Now the ideological rhetoric has vanished. The left doesn't mention it very frequently and, curiously, the main resistance comes from conservative circles that in the past supported the American way of life against Marxists.

The new US cultural invasion is not looking for allies but for profits, and the new strategy is much more efficient. In the 1970s, American culture was something so distinct from that of the Caribbean and Central and South America that it was easy to label as foreign. Today, it comes straight into the living room via satellite, with a Latin look and a familiar accent.

"Television encourages compulsive imitation of the American way of life by our middle classes, turning major US cities like Miami, Houston, Los Angeles and New York into meccas, or ceremonial centers, for Latin Americans," writes Monsivais in an article published by *The Miami Herald*.

Today one of the best informed newspapers on Latin American affairs is not published in Central or South America but in Florida, where the international edition of *The Miami Herald* prints more news each day about the region than most Latin American papers. ☐

CARLOS CASTILLO IS A FREE-LANCE BRAZILIAN JOURNALIST WHO LIVES IN COSTA RICA.

Miami energizes Latin culture

Latin Hollywood sets the tune

By Jordan Levin

MIAMI IS NOT really an American city. Or at least not what people to the north of it think of as an American city. It is a Latin American hybrid, a new breed of city for the Americas, uneasily, energetically balanced—geographically and culturally—between Latin America and the United States.

It is not just that the city is 50 percent Latino, according to the last census in 1990 (which means it is almost certainly more than 50 percent Latino today). Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston, for instance, have large Latino populations. But Latinos in Miami are not only in a numerical majority; they are part of the establishment power structure. They are present in boardrooms, local and state government, charities and community organizations, business, banking and professions of every stripe. There are many Latinos in New York and Los Angeles, but for the most part they don't run things. In Miami they do.

Miami is also Latin in the cultural sense, the effects of which are harder to define but may be more pervasively powerful. You can hear it—Spanish is spoken as often as English, perhaps more so. Arrivals from Cuba find it hard to learn English, because so much discourse takes place in Spanish. It's on the radio, which plays merengue, salsa

and Spanish ballads. It's also in the food, with rice and black beans as commonplace as *hamburguesas* and a popular fast-food chicken chain called *Pollo Tropical*.

It's also in the shopping malls, with their Spanish signs and names like Southwest area "spanglicized" into *souwesera*. Waitresses in trendy restaurants wear Cuban *guayaberas*. It's in the multitude of Spanish-language publi-

cations; in the fact that the English-language daily newspaper *The Miami Herald* will, in the normal course of things, put Spanish pop stars on the cover of its Weekend entertainment section. People routinely switch languages not once, but several times, in the course of a single sentence.

This is a city where Latin cultures meet the US culture. Everything gets mixed up and emerges a little different.



Enjoying the good life in Latin America's northernmost city—Miami

Don't call it a melting pot; call it a crucible for a new *Estadounidense-Latino* culture. Instead of a single nationality, Miami is home to Cubans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Nicaraguans, Mexicans, Argentinians, Peruvians, Brazilians and other Latinos. While each of these nationalities retains something of their own culture and style of doing things, US culture and method get mixed in. The result is a kind of slicked-up, high-speed international Latin culture reflected in everything from music to food to media.

This matters because geographically Miami is so centrally located between North and South America. Business, goods and tourists move between the hemispheres through this city. So does a flood of words and images, because Miami is also a center for the Spanish language media. *Telemundo* and *Univision*, the two Spanish-language television networks in the US, are based here. Most of the international record companies such as Sony, BMG, Warner-Electra-Atlantic and Polygram have their Latin divisions headquartered here, and there are numerous television and movie producers, journalists, and other media professionals.

In Latin America, people call Miami a Latin Hollywood. The reason: while a majority of Latin Americans

recording and television stars do not come from Miami, many of them live here at least part of the time.

Miami's significance is not tied so much to the creation of original culture as it is to the way it handles existing culture. Records, news shows, soap operas, talk shows (like *Cristina*, the Oprah Winfrey of Latin America) and pop culture images are all made in Miami, and made with American speed and using American business and publicity methods. It is pumped out by American computer systems and sent along American phone lines.

One example is Emilio Estefan, who is building a minor Latin music empire with his pop-star wife, Gloria Estefan, and other artists. His Sony-backed *Crescent Moon* label mixes slick American popular sound and media savvy with Cuban/tropical music—and it's selling by the millions in the US and abroad.

Latin Americans may consider Miami their northernmost city, but in the US it is still considered an American city. So Latin culture, in its Miamiified, Americanized form, seeps into the US, not as something radically foreign and looked-down-upon, but as a slightly sexier, more exotic domestic product. As more Latin American culture flows north into the mainstream of US culture, the question may be: "Just which American culture are we talking about?" ☐

JORDAN LEVIN IS A MIAMI-BASED WRITER ON CULTURAL ISSUES AND A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO *The Miami Herald*.

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Business scene

■ The Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) and the French Schneider Electric Co. signed a \$15 million agreement to build an electricity generating station south of Amman. The project is financed by a loan from the Islamic Development Bank and the JEA. It is expected to be completed in the summer of 1997.

■ The Rural and Urban Development Bank granted a JD 5 million loan to finance 113 projects in 40 municipalities and village councils around the Kingdom in 1995. The projects were of an infrastructural nature.

■ The Arab International Hotels Co. (AIH) agreed to increase its paid capital by JD 1.3 million, thus making it JD 9 million. Its new tourism projects are estimated at JD 12 million. During the first six months of 1995, the company realized JD 1.6 million in profits.

■ A feasibility study conducted by an Austrian cooperation has recommended the building of railway lines between Amman-Zarqa and Zarqa-Sweileh. The project will cost JD 51 million. On the other hand, a Holland consulting company will start preparing studies on the rehabilitation of the railway between Amman-Aqaba in two weeks. Holland will fund these studies.

■ Jerash received 282,599 tourists during 1995. The Records of the Antiquities Bureau show that among this total number were 81,400 Jordanians, 197,050 Arab and foreign tourists and 5,149 children. The revenues collected were JD 414,964.

■ Waste water treatment projects in Amman Governorate cost JD 35 million. Some of them have been connected to the IDB's 1995-1996 program. They are waiting for the results of invited tenders. The cost JD 13,351,000, while others are being implemented at a cost of JD 12,923,000.

■ In 1995, the Department of Public Works in the Tafleeh Governorate carried out road pavement projects and established rural roads at a cost of JD 1,914,951. Not only had these roads facilitated the connection of Tafleeh with the other cities of the country, but also helped farmers to market their products more effectively.

Fostering reforms increases investment and reduces unemployment, Fanek

AMMAN (Star)—Jordan's new economic directions and prospects were the theme of Dr Fahed Fanek's lecture at the Shoman Foundations earlier this week.

In a comparative-analytical approach, Fanek outlined the major trends of Jordan's economic management, before and after the reform program imposed by the IMF. He said that today Jordan's economy is faced by two problems: unemployment and lack of foreign currency.

Dr Fanek said that in the past, Jordan's economy was dependent on the public sector, foreign aid, and direct Government intervention. As a result, the people indulged in higher living standards than the country's resources allowed. This gap however, was filled by aid from Gulf states and borrowing from the West which led to rising debts.

Dr Fanek maintained that the new economic reform programs ensure coordination

among the different sectors. This means reducing consumption levels to suit the country's resources, and adapting to a more open economy towards the world market.

Dr Fanek said that despite what people may think, economic statistics show that there is no recession in the country. He added that people make comparisons between their situation and their expectations, rather than basing their judgments on the realities of this year as compared to last year, or on comparison with the situation in other societies.

Dr Fanek emphasized that the increase in the reserves of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), and encountering financial pressures through raising interest rates are the most significant features of the 1995 government-adopted reforms.

He added that the peace process has brought about positive results, especially since people have begun to feel more secure under the mutual recognition of borders between Israel and

Jordan. The offers of external aid, and the writing off of foreign debts add to this security.

He pointed to those factors which would affect future economic trends in Jordan. Among these is Jordan's openness to other economies and its affiliation to the GATT by the end of this year.

Dr Fanek stressed that the economy's adaptation to the new situation in the region is another important factor. He said that Palestinian markets are of crucial importance to Jordan's economy, especially as Palestinian consumer goods are almost identical to those of this country.

However, he said that this is not the case with the Israeli market, to whose different requirements, Jordan has to adapt. He explained that Jordan's economy is characterized by its agricultural and light industrial production, while the Israeli economy is highly technologically developed.

Fanek also emphasized that Iraq is the most important trading partner of Jordan.

It is the number one country in export-import terms, and it is in Jordan's interest to maintain good, strong, and natural economic relations with it.

Dr Fanek further noted that in the absence of an all-Arab integration, Jordan has to opt for one or two possibilities: an Israeli-dominated Middle East market, or entering into a European partnership. He believes that the latter option is preferable.

Dr Fanek expects Jordan's economic independence from debt and aid to materialize in 1998. By then, Jordan will be



rid of its debts, and no new programs will be needed. He added, however, that if reforms continue with such vigour, investment will increase and unemployment fall.

Ministerial conference opts for aid to Palestinian people

FOLLOWING THE Interim Agreement on 28 September, 1995, representatives of the donor community, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority met in Paris on 9 January. They endeavoured to re-energize assistance to the Palestinian people and provide additional support to the peace process.

The Ministerial Conference on Economic Assistance to the Palestinian People was hosted and chaired by France and substantial preparation was undertaken by the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee under the chairmanship of Norway. The committee includes the European Union, the United States, the Russian Federation, Japan, Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, the World Bank and the United Nations. Special Co-ordinators in the Occupied Territories. Representatives of regional and extra-regional parties as well as international organizations attended.

The participants expressed their desire to contribute to the success of the peace process. They resolved to send an unequivocal signal to Palestinians, Middle Eastern nations and the international community to stand by the Palestinian people as they take risks for peace and begin to play a larger role in shaping their destiny.

Donors underlined the

importance they attach to the elections due to take place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 20 January.

They reaffirmed their support for Palestinian self-government authority in line with the Interim Agreement of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

■ Conference participants emphasized the importance of improving the economic and social conditions of the Palestinians through a comprehensive effort to create jobs, improve physical and social infrastructure, and establish the basis for sustainable economic development.

■ In April 1995, the Palestinian National Authority, Israel, and the international community adopted a Tripartite Action Plan aimed at reducing the Palestinian budget deficit and at stimulating economic development. The participants revised the signature of a previous version of this accord which takes into account the most recent economic and



political developments. Israel will assist and facilitate Palestinian economic development. The international community is committed to support and contribute to the economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

■ The Palestinian National Authority also underscored the importance of the Core Investment Program, which was unanimously adopted by PNA and presented by the authority during the meeting of the Consultative Group of the World Bank last October.

the recurrent cost deficit of \$75 million, by mobilizing the following resources:

Undisbursed commitments amounting to US \$ 500 million, commitments in 1996 to the Core Investment Program, other priority projects, recurrent cost deficit and other forms of assistance, amounting to \$ 865 million.

This amounts to more than \$13 billion, which will be mobilized by the donor community in 1996. In addition, a number of donor countries would continue to provide substantial levels of in-kind assistance.

■ The Conference requested that the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee follow-up on all issues raised during this Conference and additional project proposals put forward by the Palestinian Authority. The AHLIC would undertake to hold no informal meeting in April.

■ The PNA committed itself to a medium term economic strategy focused on private investment as the engine of growth. The plan aims to help the Palestinian economy to take its place in a regional and global environment of trade and investment.

■ The United States and the European Union announced their intention to improve ways of promoting Palestinian exports through the granting of duty-free status and other trade privileges.

IDP at forefront of industrial development

AMMAN (Star)—The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) realized a net profit of JD 4.8 million in 1995 compared to only JD 2.8 million in 1994 (a 71 per cent increase).

Mr Rajab Al-Sa'd, the IDB's general manager, said this increase is the direct result of the efforts of the management that are aimed at promoting the bank and rationalizing its expenses. He added that the IDB continued to offer loans to industry at an unprecedented level that was compatible to the economic growth taking place in Jordan.

Mr Al-Sa'd said the bank earned in 1995 a total of JD 7.3 million compared to JD 4.7 million in the year before. He said the IDB's management and general expenses de-

creased from JD 2.2 million in 1994 to JD 1.9 million in 1995. As for the IDB's assets, Mr Al-Sa'd said they increased from JD 124 million in 1994 to JD 135 million last year. He explained that this increase in the bank's assets was mainly to the credits it offered to the industrial and tourism sectors. In real terms, they increased from JD 91 million in 1994 to JD 101 million in 1995.

Mr Al-Sa'd pointed out that the net deposits of the shareholders' equity amounted to JD 28 million in 1995 compared with nearly JD 16 million in 1994 (an increase of almost 75 per cent). This increase accrued from two main factors: the rise in the bank's paid capital, and the increase in the bank's various re-

serves. Mr Al-Sa'd said that in 1995 the IDB granted 137 loans at JD 21 million. These included 97 industrial loan projects at JD 15 million; 22 tourist projects loans at JD 5 million; and another 18 loans at JD 1 million.

He noted that the costs of these projects are estimated at JD 6 million. He added that they are expected to accrue a JD 25 million in value added terms to the GNP, and create about 1,259 new jobs.

The IDB also granted in 53 loans in 1995 at JD 400,000 to minor professions and handicrafts around the Kingdom.

In the field of training, Al-Sa'd said that the IDB's Jordan's Institute of Management organized 124

training programs in 1995, from which 1,385 Jordanian and Arab participants benefited.

On the IDB's role and its preservation of the environment, Mr Al-Sa'd said that in accordance with the Jordanian-German agreement, the IDB has access to DEM 5 million to fund efforts at reducing pollution and environmental dangers. He added that the IDB uses these funds to grant soft loans to existing industrial enterprises to assist them abide by safety standards and preservation of the environment.

As for future plans, Mr Al-Sa'd said that the IDB has adopted a package of new investment policies, comprehensive banking services, and diversified resources.

Business Chronicle

Remarks on the 1996 budget

THE ANNUAL budget, which has just been passed by Parliament, reflects the major directions of the present economic and social policies, said Dr Munir Hamameh. The budget is not an account of revenues and appropriations, but has repercussions on economic activity and social concerns. Hence, equilibrium and imbalance in a state's budget should not and could not be viewed in isolation from society. Writing in *Ad Dussour* he said combined with socio-economic policies, the budget must serve society and realize its stability and progress, not vice versa.

Dr Hamameh dwells on issues which inspire equilibrium, but also trigger or deepen the imbalance in society. The first concern is domestic revenues, he said. The 1996 budget estimates amounts of JD 1552 million. This is a 5.6 per cent increase over the 1995 revenues, but there is an important difference. In the previous years, including 1995, revenues included the post, phone, and cable services which amounted to JD 170 million. The earnings from these are excluded from the 1996 budget, though they continue to be paid by people. However, there is no reason to drop these from the budget at a stroke and without explanation, Dr Hamameh maintains. But, since citizens continue to bear the financial burden of these services, then the earnings accrued have to be part of the overall revenues which would naturally increase to JD 1690 million (17 per cent over 1995).

The second concern deals with income tax. It amounts to JD 865 million (57 per cent of total earnings). It has increased tremendously over the previous years and its largest proportion comes from the sales tax. Revenues from customs duties are estimated at JD 560 million compared with JD 499 million in 1995 (an 11.22 per cent increase). However, it is quite noticeable that while customs duties were decreasing throughout the past few years, the sales tax tended to go upwards, he said.

Custom duties were JD 230 million in 1993; JD 217 million in 1994; JD 212 million in 1995; and are estimated at JD 205 million in 1996. Since its institution in 1993, the sales tax increased from JD 174 million, to JD 223 million in 1994, JD 280 million in 1995, and is now estimated at JD 374 million for 1996 (a 33.5 per cent increase over 1995). As is known, this is an indirect tax, but it affects prices and national production costs.

The third concern is the impact of the reduction in custom duties. This leads to an increase in imports, and logically increases the pressure on the balance of payment. Despite the fact that state policies in general encourage export, it is not seen—under the circumstances—that any increases can be sufficient enough to reduce the foreign trade deficit. As a result, the tendency towards foreign borrowing will strengthen, and foreign debts will increase to treat the occurring imbalance in the balance of payment, which is contradictory to the economic reform and correction policies of this country, Dr Hamameh concluded.

Israel looks to the Far East

AS A result of the peace process, Israel wants to establish business in Asia and is looking to places such as India, China, Vietnam, Pakistan and Indonesia. According to the Chairman of the Israel Corporation Ltd, the message is clear. "They want us, they need us, they like us." The real peace dividend for Israel is that the barriers are now down in the fastest-growing markets in the world, which are in Asia, not the Middle East.

Potential trade between Israel and Arab countries remains limited despite all the optimism and talk of a new Middle East. Israeli trade with Egypt, with which Israel has been at peace with for 16 years, was \$44 million in 1994. That figure was double that of 1993, but Israeli officials don't expect Egyptian-Israeli trade to go much beyond \$100 million in the coming years. Israel has set a strategy to target Asian countries which are eager for business. Their markets offer a better fit for Israeli high-technology, agricultural and consumer products.

Israel is aggressively courting counterparts from Indonesia, China, Japan and South Korea, both at international meetings and on personal visits. Business delegations flow to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and other former Soviet Republics.

Unlike trade with her Arab neighbors, Israel's business with Asia is booming. Overall trade has grown 85 per cent in the past four years, from under \$3 billion in 1990 to \$5.5 billion in 1994.

Some Israeli companies, specially the high-tech ones, consider the Asia-Pacific region as the most dynamic market. For the Israeli Rada Data Communications, China is now the second largest market, after the US.

The Asian arena offers not just lucrative markets, but the kind of acceptance Israel has carved in the Middle East. In Jordan, a businessman who has signed an agreement to import products from Israeli companies, said that he is labelling them all "Made in the USA" for fear of being boycotted. In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, Strauss Ice cream, Maccabee beer and other Israeli brand names are flown in weekly from Tel Aviv and sold on the streets of the former Soviet Republic.

The major Israeli exports to Asia consist of precious stones, and metals (54 per cent), machinery and electrical equipments (22 per cent), Chemical products (15 per cent), and 9 per cent others.

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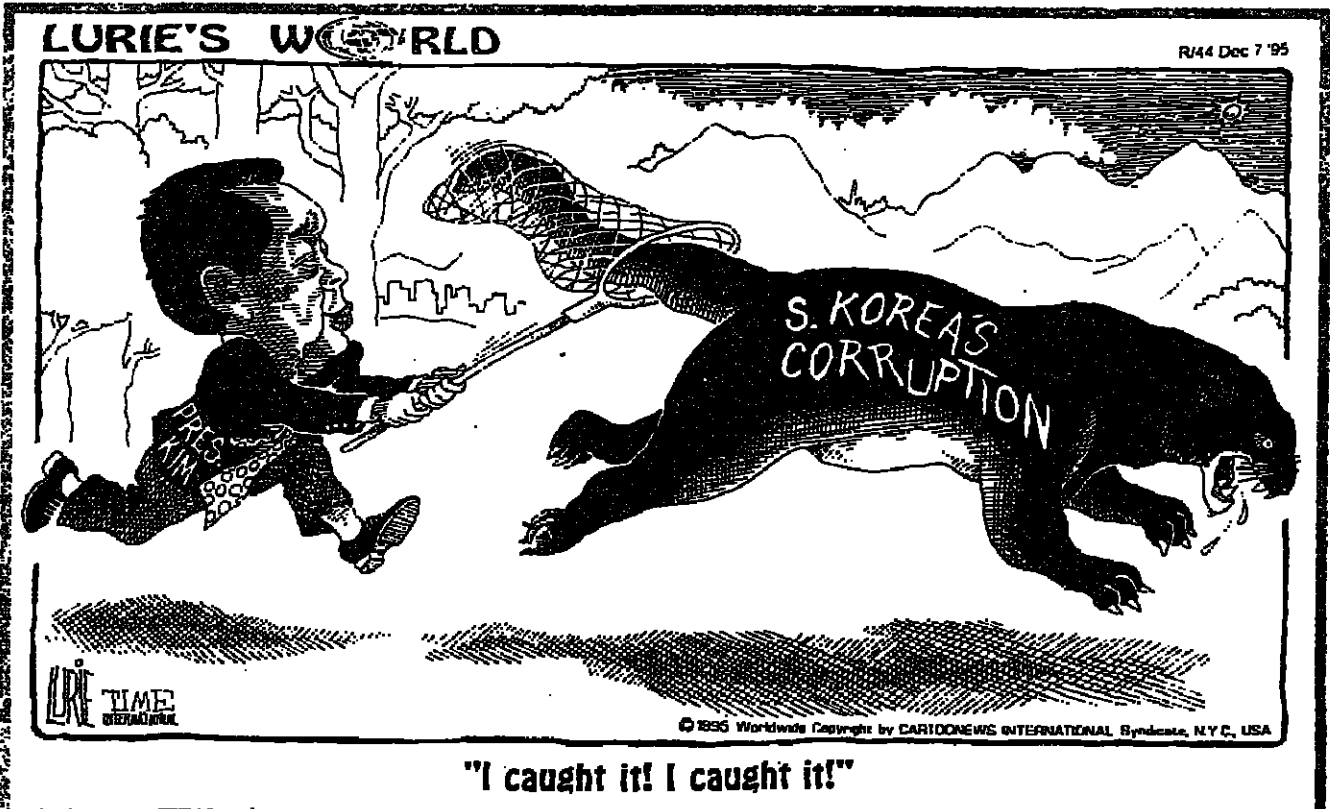
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AROUND TOWN



Mabrouk

● Samer al Qaderi and his bride Niveen Saadeh celebrated their engagement recently among the circle of their friends and relatives. We wish them a happy and prosperous life together.



Ghazi Al Thibah:

A poetic celebration of daily life

By Munther Hamdan
Special to The Star

GAZI AL THIBAH is a Jordanian poet with a distinguished style of writing and a language that reflects everyday life. He believes poets should create in people a sensitivity towards the beauties of life. Poetry can play a significant role in people's life provided it is related to their everyday reality.

Al Thibah lately published his first collection of poetry entitled "Forgotten Statements". The book, which was issued by the Arab Writers Union in Damascus, consists of poems celebrating statements and ways of life that are no longer in the memory of people. These aspects do not appear in Al Thibah's poem as they are in actuality but as they are perceived by the artist whose imagination introduces them artistically.

Al Thibah told The Star that his book is a collection of rhymed and unrhymed poetry written up to 1993. He added that presenting daily life in poetry using simple language, usually prose, must pay close attention to the importance of the structure. "Poets should have their own techniques since poetry is not only spontaneous writing," Al Thibah said.

"Forgotten statements" converts the language of prose into poetry. Al Thibah

thinks that life is a variation of rhythms that poets can turn into poetic structures. People's speeches, jokes, differences and emotions are all present in the book. It is as if the poet draws our attention to details we forgot or we have never noticed before. He said in one of his poems "A Clock on the wall/ A clock in front of me counting air in the room". A poet lives in a different time-frame from everyone else.

The difference between poets, if judged by their works and not their autobiographies, lies in the style they adopt when picturing reality. Some problematize reality, thus creating a philosophical poem, while others introduce it in a superficial manner. Al Thibah chose a place in between. His creativity is due to his innovative choice of details he includes in his poem. "Depicting reality is a form of hunting, thus one should be precise" Al Thibah told The Star.

The reader is part of the creative process. Poetry can live only through the interaction between the writer and the reader. The whole process is an exploration of a mutual mentality. Al Thibah believes poetry must aspire to reach all people regardless of their educational levels. "A poet is not forced to choose only what he thinks the reader is likely to



understand or absorb" he added. The relation between the reader and the writer can be strengthened if poets write in a style that everyone can understand without affecting the sophistication of the text.

Poets like Al Thibah should be supported. Creative people who are always questioning reality to produce such poetry should be taken care of. Intellectuals should work together to create a ground for a collective consciousness and a unified perspective of knowledge and culture. In this respect, it is painful to find that Al Thibah's book is issued in another country. In order not to lose our intellectuals we have to provide them with equal opportunities because in the end "the best lives on". ■



Concert conducted by Charles Ansbacher

A brilliant start of the season

By Eyad Ammari
Special to The Star

UNDER THE Patronage of HM Queen Noor Al Hussein The National Music Conservatory and the American Center hosted visiting conductor Dr Charles Ansbacher, featuring the Orchestra of the National Music Conservatory and the Orchestra of the Jordanian Armed Forces on Sunday, 14 January.

With an impressive program, the National Music Conservatory Orchestra's sixty-four members started the concert with Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* overture. An opera in three acts produced in 1874, libretto by Carl Haffner and Richard Genée after the French farce *Le Réveillon*, the overture is always pleasant and contains much of the richness and liveliness of the Viennese music of that era. Savitana Farouqi was the piano soloist of Mozart's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* no. 24 in C minor, KV 491. The arrangement was brilliant and acoustics of the Royal Hall at the Philadelphia Hotel were excellent. The trills that seemed to rise indefinitely were never lost among the orchestra; rather, Ansbacher easily managed to give the proper introduction and accompaniment. An American taste of contemporary orchestral music, and finely selected, was presented from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*.



After the intermission, the Jordanian Armed Forces Orchestra (fifty four members) took the orchestra seats and started with George Bizet's *L'Arlesienne*. Composed in 1872 for a play by Alfonse Daudet under the same name, Bizet later wrote an orchestral suite. In 1879, Ernest Guiraud wrote the second suite which Ansbacher chose to play Sunday night. Johannes Brahms Hungarian Dances numbers 5 and 6 followed in a very new arrangement. Originally part of 21 dances for piano four-hands composed in 1851-69 Brahms later wrote numbers one, three and ten for orchestra, and in 1873 wrote

numbers one to ten for piano solo. Under Ansbacher's conducting the pieces were performed orchestrally without piano, a relatively innovative approach, especially since they were originally written in the style of the so-called Gypsy music (a small group of instrumentalists) rather than drawing on Hungarian folk music.

The two orchestras then joined to play two marches. Johann Strauss' *Radetzky March* and John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* March. Halfway through the first March, Ansbacher turned towards the audience and started clapping and soon the spectators joined him. This brilliant move turned the atmosphere to that of a ball-

room dance to everyone's content. After the marches, Queen Noor and the audience refused to leave the room, continuing their applause and demanding more music, and finally Ansbacher returned and repeated *Radetzky March*.

An icon of Jordan's cultural achievement, the conservatory's orchestra also offers group practice opportunities to the conservatory's students and teachers. The orchestra holds several concerts annually directed by Mohammad Othman Sidiq. Founded in 1979, the Armed Forces Orchestra gave many concerts in Jordan and abroad. The two orchestras glowed under Ansbacher's conducting, although he had little time to practice the pieces with them. Ansbacher's excitement and zeal for the event were beyond description, expressed by a small speech after the intermission and the way he repeatedly brought the musicians up to the platform to receive their share of homage.

The concert comes to prove, once again, the admirable level of the conservatory's achievement and their excellence choice of music. By playing classical favourites, they have managed to create an audience with an interest in a branch of music that is relatively new to Jordan. The concert is the first event of the 1996 season at the conservatory, and they still have much in store for us. ■

Varieties at Royal Cultural Center

AN EVENING of poetry, Spanish songs and Russian opera was held Sunday at the Royal Cultural Center. The big audience was treated to two different styles of singing. Popular Spanish songs were performed by Mary David and her group which allowed the audience to enjoy some well-known dancing tunes. On the other hand, opera songs were performed by singer Svetlana Kupavina and Marina Sarokina presenting a kind of art that is highly different from the other, requiring more concentration.

The concert began by a poetry recital by Samir Al Shomali. He recited two poems about Amman and Beirut. The two cities were depicted as places of beauty, peace and love.

Following that, Mary David (singer), Youssef Ibrahim (guitarist) and William Moushi (organist) performed some popular Spanish songs.

They played the Spanish dancing melody "Porompompo". The name of the song itself suggests a highly rhythmic tune. They also played "Agua dulce Agua" a piece written by the famous composer Sala Gulló Iglesias. Ibrahim and Moushi joined David in singing leading to an integrated performance.

With Svetlana as a pianist, David performed a French song entitled "L'oiseau et l'enfant". This song won the 21st Euro-vision contest with its call for love and peace. Although the song was in French, the audience could feel the enchanting rhythms of a romantic piece directing people to peace and stability.

David is a teacher of Ballroom and Arabic dancing. She graduated from England and then took vocal courses under the supervision of Svetlana. As for Youssef Ibrahim, he has a B.A. in Spanish language from Baghdad. He has been playing guitar for 20 years before joining the Jordanian Academy for music. Moushi is an Iraqi artist who is specialized in European, Latin American and Arabic Music. He played with many Orchestras for 15 years.

The second part of the concert was Svetlana's unprecedented performance of Opera Arias. Among the most famous pieces she performed were Bellini's "Aria Norma of Opera Norma", Puccini's "Aria of Cio Ciosan opera" and Rossini's "Aria of Rosina". Svetlana's voice carried with it that simplicity which is characteristic of Russian culture. Her facial reactions during the performance reflected her full absorption into the music. She presented to Jordanians this opera which combines all depths of life. ■ MH



Orbit special show on New Year's eve

THE ARAB world's leading satellite, radio and terrestrial broadcasters all came together to celebrate New Year's Eve 1996 in Beirut.

The Orbit Satellite Television and Radio Network, Radio Monte Carlo Moyen Orient, and Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International all joined forces in the Levant for an eight hour marathon programme bringing in the New Year.

The joint broadcast from Beirut featured Doris from Al Thania - the Orbit channel carrying the broadcast to satellite - who flew in to co-host the show with fellow presenters, including Gabi Lutfail from Radio Monte Carlo Moyen Orient. Between link-ups with Cairo and Dubai, the programme presented Beirut nightspots, joining the celebrations, while Orbit receives were given as prizes to lucky viewers, as were cars and airline tickets.

Speaking about the broadcast, Doris said: "It was wonderful to work with LBCI and Radio Monte Carlo Moyen Orient. We all came together and worked very well as a team."

Radio Monte Carlo Moyen Orient is the world's leading Arabic language radio channel, with 11 million listeners from Alexandria to Abu Dhabi. LBCI is one of Lebanon's foremost television channels, drawing a national audience for special broadcasts such as New Year's Eve. ■

OVERHEARD AT TURINO

TURINO - A PASSION FOR FUN

TURINO CLUB RESTAURANT is adding another Cheers outlet in a new setting. We heard that Turino is preparing a new style advertisement that runs as follows:-

- Cheers at Turino II (code name)**
- What is it?
Is it a restaurant, a pub, a trattoria, an eatery, a water-hole, a rock cafe, a tea room, a pizzeria, a burger joint, an imperial setting, a wild diner or whatever?
 - For whom?
For you the local, the foreigner, the Arab, the American, the European, the Japanese, the Korean, the Australian, the African.
 - Or is it for you all?
 - Is it for the young?
Or is it a place where the young rub shoulders with the old?

**** NO ANSWER NO COMMITMENT; EXCEPT ONE! CHECK IT FOR YOURSELF**

See you at Turino or Cheers at Turino II!
Telephone 816690



Victor Bisharat 1918-1996 Monuments speak of his creative genius

VICTOR ADEL HANNA Bisharat, a well-known Palestinian architect passed away on Monday, 8 January 1996 in his home in Sacramento, California, leaving behind many architectural monuments that bear witness to his genius.

Bisharat was born in Jerusalem and studied at Terra Sancta college. He completed his higher education at the school of architecture at the American University of Beirut. In 1943, he left Jerusalem to the United States to study architecture and philosophy, settling in the United States after completing his studies.

Bisharat specialized in urban design. He established a prominent architecture firm with offices in Connecticut and New York. His international work included the design of the Jordan Pavilion for the World Fair held

in New York in 1963. Its design expresses the authentic Arab style in its domes and stained glass panels.

The pavilion was the first official introduction of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan abroad. In Jordan, Bisharat designed the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Amman. Unfortunately there is no reference to him as the innovator and designer of this monument.

The simple design of this work expresses the grandeur of Bisharat's work. Stone cubes with a band of black stones, engraved with beautiful calligraphy in gold - a stairway, lead-



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier designed by Victor Bisharat

ing to the entrance of the monument.

Other outstanding projects speak of his brilliant achievements and the unmistakable marks he left in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and many other places in the Arab World. He came back to Jordan in 1973 to design Queen Alia Air-

port. He would have loved to offer Jordan such a project but it was never realized. Instead he returned to America to realize his project there. He is survived by his brothers Dr. Maurice Bisharat, and Dr. George Bisharat, Dr. Emile Bisharat and Architect Fred Bisharat, who is following in his footsteps. He is also survived by his wife Clarita, son Tobias and daughters Arian and Yasmine.

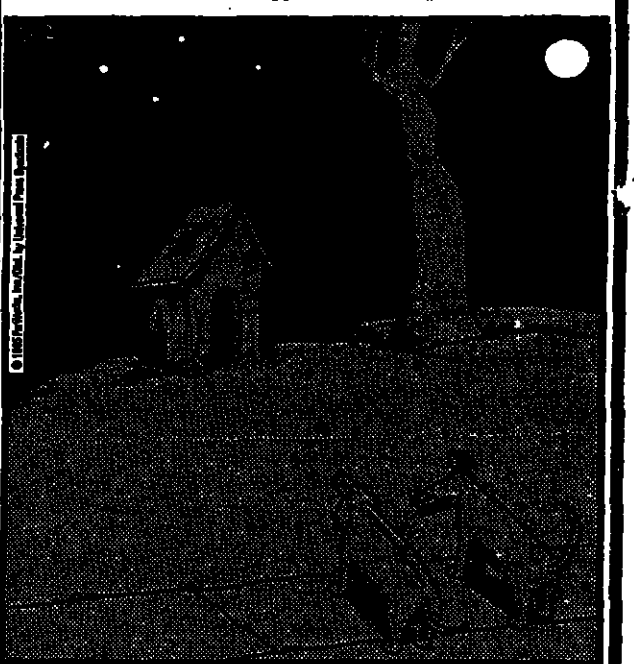
He will always be remembered by his work and the words he spoke at the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. "Excite all what you see of body and soul; the secret of eternal life is in giving..." ■

THE FAR SIDE

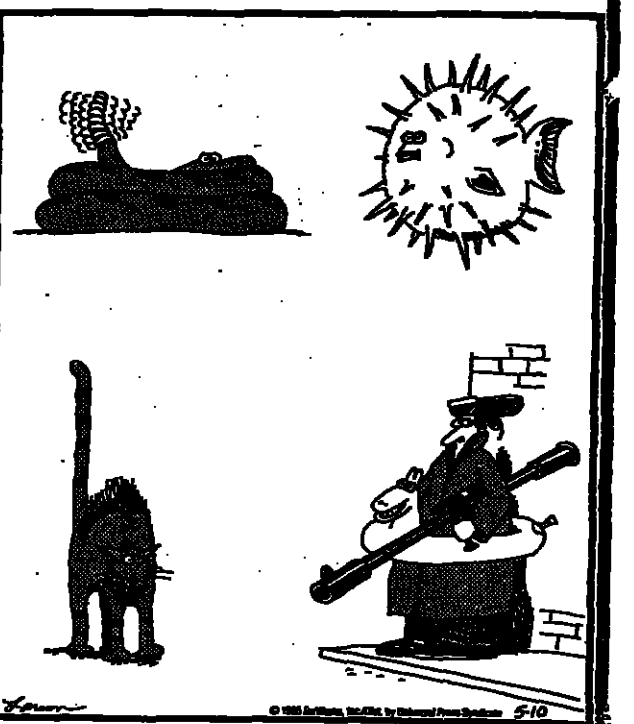
By GARY LARSON



Ornithology 101 field trips



There it is—the old Muffy place. They say on some nights, when the moon is full, you can still hear him dragging his chain to the old oak and back."



How Nature says, "Do not touch."

AGENDA

- Exhibitions**
- A New Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by over 50 Contemporary Arab Artists, at Darat al Funun, today, Thursday, 18 January
 - Print-making and Painting exhibition by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik, at Darat al Funun. Opening today, Thursday, 18 January and continuing until 18 February.
 - Water colour paintings and photographs by a German artist group at the Goethe Institut from Sunday 13 Jan until Sunday 21 Jan (except Friday) 9 am-6 pm.
 - The Client at the American Center, today Thursday, 18 January at 5 pm.
 - Der zerbrochene Krug by Heinrich von Kleist at the Goethe Institut on Monday, 22 January at 8 pm.
 - Maria Stuart by Friedrich von Schiller at the Goethe Institut on Wednesday, 24 January at 8 pm.
 - Le fils préfère at the French Cultural Center on Monday 22 January, at 8 pm.
- Lecture**
- Lecture in Arabic by the artist Yasser Dweik about his exhibition at Darat al Funun, on Saturday, 20 Jan.
- Films**

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

La France prête à s'engager au Sud-Liban

● La France s'est déclarée prête à apporter une contribution «concrète et matérielle» pour garantir la paix au Liban-Sud dans l'éventualité d'un retrait israélien. A l'issue d'un entretien avec son homologue libanais Fares Bouez, le ministre français des Affaires étrangères, Hervé De Charette, a déclaré mardi que les propositions françaises, loin d'être rejetées, avaient reçu un écho favorable auprès des autorités libanaises. Fares Bouez a ensuite confirmé que M. De Charette l'avait informé que la France était prête à s'engager, avec l'accord des différents protagonistes du conflit, dans une opération de maintien de la paix au Sud-Liban. Jeudi dernier, la porte-parole du président Jacques Chirac avait déjà précisé que la France acceptait de participer à toute opération ayant pour but de garantir la paix entre Israël, la Syrie et le Liban si tel était le souhait de toutes les parties.



Elections

Les Palestiniens choisissent leurs voix

Pour la première fois se dérouleront samedi des élections générales dans les territoires autonomes palestiniens. Décisif dans le processus d'autonomie palestinien, ce scrutin ne comporte pas de grande surprise, la majorité des candidats étant des sympathisants de Yasser Arafat.

Samedi sera une nouvelle étape de l'autonomie palestinienne: plus d'un million d'électeurs sont appelés aux urnes pour les premières élections générales. Il s'agit d'élire un Conseil de l'autonomie et son président le 20 janvier, sous observation internationale. 88 élus devraient prendre en mains le destin des habitants des Territoires occupés depuis 1967. Pour ce scrutin rassemblant 676 candidats, seulement 28 femmes se présentent, soit 4% des candidats.

La décision de tenir les élections à cette date est le fruit de longues et épineuses négociations entre le gouvernement israélien et l'Organisation de libération de la Palestine. Pour les Israéliens, il s'agit d'un simple conseil administratif de seize personnes ayant pour tâche d'appliquer la politique israélienne, en quelque sorte.

Quant aux Palestiniens, ils voyaient dans ce conseil un instrument législatif composé de 186 élus.

Entre ces deux chiffres, 16 et 186, Israéliens et Palestiniens sont tombés d'accord sur 87 sièges au Conseil palestinien. Sans préciser s'il s'agit d'un conseil administratif ou législatif. C'est «l'ambiguïté construc-

tive», encore une fois, qui régit les relations entre les protagonistes, comme l'a dit un responsable américain voilà des années.

Un siège supplémentaire est réservé aux juifs palestiniens, cette minorité juive de Samariens à Naplouse, pour affirmer le caractère d'unité nationale de l'ensemble du peuple palestinien. La consultation était prévue pour avril mais elle a été avancée parce qu'elle est liée au déploiement des forces israéliennes de la Cisjordanie qui se poursuit avec élan.

Ce sont les premières élections générales. Il y avait eu auparavant des élections syndicales ou associatives en Palestine ou à l'extérieur, dont les représentants siègent au Conseil national palestinien. En 1976, les autorités israéliennes d'occupation avaient laissé se dérouler des élections municipales dans les villes de Cisjordanie en pensant que ce scrutin allait amener une direction hostile à l'O.L.P.

Le résultat fut contraire: 96 élus étaient partisans de la centrale palestinienne.

Il s'agissait donc de la période passée d'un vote politique où les compétences

professionnelles étaient quasiment ignorées. Aujourd'hui, même si l'objectif de libération nationale des Palestiniens est loin d'être atteint, l'accent politique n'est plus majeur dans les slogans électoraux. D'une part parce que les bases du Conseil sont garanties par les accords d'Oslo pour une période transitoire. D'autre part, parce que les soucis des citoyens palestiniens sont aujourd'hui d'ordre économique après plus de 28 années d'occupation qui ont détruit toute infrastructure.

Le réveil des grandes familles

Par ailleurs, la société palestinienne est en train d'assister à un réveil du phénomène des grandes familles, des clans, qui avait été gelé tout au long des années de la révolution armée et de la lutte populaire, pendant la lutte armée et l'intifada. Durant cette période, tout signe familial était absent. Ce qui comptait c'était plus la contribution au combat.

Toute la société palestinienne est impliquée aujourd'hui dans les élections. Les réunions, les consultations et les campagnes se succèdent. Toutes les forces sont concernées, y compris l'opposition.

Si le mouvement de la résistance islamique, le Hamas, refuse de participer au scrutin, il s'est engagé à ne pas le perturber.

Il en est de même pour le F.D.L.P. de Georges Habbache, dont le bureau politique a pris la ferme décision à Damas de

boycotter les élections. Mais des personnalités du F.D.L.P. ont déjà officiellement annoncé leur candidature. Quant au principal mouvement d'O.L.P., le Fatah, des débats internes se poursuivent depuis des semaines pour désigner les candidats. Les élections internes s'étant même déroulées dans certaines localités.

Les premiers résultats ont exprimé un mécontentement de la base du Fatah vis-à-vis de sa direction historique. Pour les autres partis, leur participation révolutionnaire à la légitimité normale constitutionnelle qui constitue la première base d'un prochain Etat palestinien indépendant.

De Gaza, Hassan Balawi

Entretien

«La liberté de la presse est utopique dans le monde arabe»

Pour Riyad Ben Fadhel, rédacteur en chef du Monde diplomatique en arabe, la liberté d'expression a régressé dans les médias des pays arabes ces dernières années.

A l'initiative de l'Union des Nations Unies, un séminaire s'est tenu la semaine dernière au Yémen sur la promotion de l'indépendance et du pluralisme des médias des pays arabes. Pendant quatre jours, les participants ont notamment débattu de la formation des journalistes ou de la question de la censure.

Riyad Ben Fadhel, rédacteur en chef du Monde diplomatique en arabe, décrit la situation dans laquelle se trouvent les médias des pays arabes.

Quel est l'état de l'indépendance de la presse dans les pays arabes?

La situation des libertés démocratiques, et donc des libertés d'expression et d'opinion, est peut-être, sans vouloir être pessimiste, dans le monde arabe, là où on connaît le plus de problèmes.

A l'exception près de quelques timides tentatives d'ouverture politique qui sont liées à une ambiance générale et à des pressions internationales, la liberté de la presse, la liberté d'expression et d'opinion dans le monde arabe, restent en deçà du minimum requis dans n'importe quelle société civile du monde.

Quelle explication peut-on donner à cela?

Les traditions de société civile et de démocratie dans le monde arabe sont en deçà des traditions européennes, ou anglo-saxonnes. La pratique des partis au pouvoir reste une pratique quasiment privée. Le pouvoir est géré comme un bien privé, et l'accès des citoyens aux responsabilités de l'Etat reste grandement régenté par des oligarchies qui sont encore imprégnées de réflexes d'avant la guerre froide, et parfois même de réflexes tribaux ou datant de sociétés qui n'ont pas connu d'évolution fondamentale en terme d'économie, d'ouverture.

Quelles sont les principales difficultés rencontrées par les médias?

Le problème le plus direct, c'est qu'aujourd'hui aucun journaliste arabe ne peut se targuer d'être libre. On a envie d'écrire. Quand ce n'est pas pour des raisons intérieures d'un pays qui est complètement autoritaire, on peut à tout moment justifier des intérêts diplomatiques du pays en question pour empêcher d'écrire sur l'international.

Et lorsque n'est pas directe, la censure s'exerce sur le promoteur du journal dans le cas de journaux dits indépendants, c'est-à-dire appartenant à des groupes privés non directement liés à l'Etat. Cela peut se traduire par une suspension du droit d'importation du papier, une transformation du dépôt légal. Les moyens d'enlever la liberté d'expression sont multiformes et aussi évolués que la technologie de l'information.

La privatisation des médias n'offrirait-elle pas tout de même plus d'indépendance?

La privatisation des médias ou l'intervention de groupes étrangers sont l'une des solutions. Mais ce n'est pas la panacée. La plupart des groupes privés ne sont pas autonomes et tirent leur profit d'opérations avec l'Etat.

Ce qu'il faut c'est avant tout travailler à la formation des journalistes. Ils doivent refuser d'être des gens qui ne signent jamais leurs papiers. Le monde arabe est la zone du monde où l'on voit le plus grand nombre de journaux non signés.

Un journaliste digne de ce nom doit être capable de faire un travail d'investigation. En capitalisant une information et en recouvrant pour la mettre en valeur, il refusera de voir cette information passer à la trappe.

Les libertés d'expression ne se sont-elles pas encore dégradées ces dernières années?

Il faut être franc et direct. Depuis l'intervention atlantique dans la guerre du Golfe qui s'est faite sous le motif noble de mettre fin à l'occupation d'un pays et de provoquer un changement démocratique dans la région, la situation des libertés

démocratiques, aussi mauvaises étaient-elles à la veille de la guerre du Golfe, s'est détériorée.

Dans tous les pays arabes, la situation des libertés d'expression et d'opinion est en recul manifeste d'une manière nette et claire.

L'autoritarisme encore plus pervers est que la dynamique de la répression au nom de l'occupation israélienne, qui était un moyen de censure très pervers, s'est substitué aujourd'hui par deux vecteurs. D'une part la lutte contre l'islamisme qui sert d'épouvantail et de justificatif, et d'autre part la question de la paix.

L'antagonisme avec Israël a donné des potentialités extraordinaires aux censeurs pour frapper la presse et aujourd'hui, la dynamique de la paix donne à ces mêmes censeurs des moyens pour frapper la liberté de la presse.

Et ce qui est dramatique, c'est de voir que l'autorité nationale palestinienne, en qui tout le monde a fondé des espoirs énormes, reproduit les mêmes schémas que d'autres pays arabes.

Peut-on, dans ces conditions, espérer voir un jour se développer une réelle liberté de la presse?

L'absence de structures démocratiques, de tradition démocratique, de liberté et de droit d'expression des citoyens fait que la liberté de la presse est utopique dans le monde arabe.

Ceci dit, c'est peut-être par le combat des journalistes, des groupes de presse arabes qui commencent à connaître un certain rayonnement, que l'on peut contribuer à développer une conception démocratique de la presse qui elle-même permettra de développer une conception démocratique de la société.

Il est illusoire de parler de solution idéale. Il faut aller vers le moins mauvais possible. Nous sommes condamnés à ce choix tant que les régimes arabes sont ce qu'ils sont.

Profil recueilli par François Petitdemange

Le projet de loi sur l'enfance rédigé récemment par le ministère du Développement social a provoqué la réaction de différents organismes militants pour les droits des enfants. Pour elles, cette loi, longtemps attendue, manque de rigueur, ainsi que de profondeur.

«C'est effectivement une initiative positive qu'a prise le ministère. Cependant, elle exige plus d'études pour définir les différents droits des enfants», estime Asma Khader, avocate et présidente de l'Union des femmes jordaniennes. «Ce projet de loi concerne la moitié de la population. 41% des Jordaniens ayant moins de quinze ans».

Cette ébauche de loi sur l'enfance ne répond pas à toutes les attentes. «Pourquoi ce projet de loi sur l'enfance alors que l'on peut adopter une loi sur les droits des enfants qui porte un sens plus large et qui aborde des sujets plus vastes?», s'interroge Suleimane Sweiss, docteur en sociologie.

«La loi proposée minimise les droits des enfants».

Elle permet notamment de décider pour les orphelins, les enfants dont les parents sont inconnus, ou ceux qui sont maltraités, de les séparer ou non de leurs familles. Elle donne au ministre du Développement social, ou aux personnes qu'il nomme, le droit de tout décider pour les enfants. «Pourquoi n'y aurait-il pas un comité de spécialistes pour étudier les cas, écouter les enfants et rendre des jugements plus justes?», se demande Asma Khader.

«Séparer un enfant de sa famille pour le rattacher à une autre famille n'est pas une décision facile à prendre pour un juge, pour le ministère du Développement social ou pour des spécialistes», explique Nazieh Hamdi, formatrice d'éducateurs spécialisés.

La loi en vigueur concernant l'enfance dépend du droit public, ce que le nouveau projet de loi est censé modifier en le rattachant au droit privé afin d'avoir la priorité d'application.



Selon de nombreuses associations, le gouvernement ne tient pas assez compte de l'avis des spécialistes dans son projet de loi sur l'enfance.

«C'est indispensable d'avoir une loi pour mettre fin à l'abus continué des droits des enfants», ajoute Nazieh Hamdi. «On a fortement besoin d'une coopération entre le ministère du Développement social et celui de la Justice, ainsi que de la présence de spécialistes de l'éducation des enfants dans les universités».

Un comité sans spécialistes

Pour prendre des décisions juridiques ayant un impact considérable sur la vie des enfants, il ne faut pas mésestimer l'importance des spécialistes. La loi à l'étude propose la création d'un comité, le Comité du conseil supérieur, qui aura un rôle administratif.

Il sera notamment chargé de proposer des politiques nationales à propos de l'éducation, d'organiser les programmes entre les différents organismes s'occupant de la santé, de recevoir les plaintes des enfants maltraités et de les diriger vers

des spécialistes. Ce comité se compose du ministre du Développement social, Salwa el Masri, du secrétaire général du ministère du Développement social, celui de l'Éducation, de la Santé, de la Culture, du représentant de l'Union des associations bénévoles, de la caisse de la reine Alia et de la fondation Nour el Hussein. «On sont les spécialistes ici?», tempête Asma Khader.

Désiré par la famille royale, un autre comité réunira la semaine prochaine des spécialistes, des associations privées et publiques nationales et internationales souhaitant collaborer pour l'amélioration des conditions de vie des enfants.

«Il faut intensifier nos efforts pour avoir une seule voix solide en faveur des enfants», explique Dana Toukan, employée au Bureau de la reine Nour.

Lors du colloque organisé la semaine dernière à Amman par l'Union des femmes jordaniennes, ce projet de loi a été

jugé décevant par la plupart des participants. «Comme si notre travail pendant les cinq dernières années était éparpillé», commente Emei Nazeek, représentante de l'Unicef.

Tous sont tombés d'accord pour proposer un nouveau projet au pouvoir législatif. Et au mois de mars, une conférence intitulée «La loi sur l'enfance: état des lieux et propositions» se tiendra à Amman afin de permettre aux citoyens de bénéficier de droits plus justes.

Les opposants à ce projet loi peuvent en effet encore espérer le faire évoluer, car comme le reconnaît Khalil al Banna, directeur de l'information au ministère du Développement social: «cela fait deux semaines que l'on a publié l'annonce dans les journaux officiels, alors que ce projet n'est pas encore définitif à cause des remarques continuelles que font beaucoup de gens».

Oroub El Abed

SELON MOI

La seule nouvelle qui ne se démode jamais en Jordanie est l'anticipation d'un remaniement ministériel. Même au moment de la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement, les premières analyses révèlent déjà l'incohérence du cabinet et anticipent son effondrement à cause de son incapacité à assumer les responsabilités ou gérer les problèmes importants.

En fait, les Jordaniens ne se montrent jamais satisfaits de la composition finale d'un gouvernement. A chaque fois, ils pensent qu'un ministre pourrait être remplacé par un autre, ou que le gouvernement devrait inclure tel ou tel ministre.

Mais leur intérêt pour ces remaniements ministériels n'est guidé que par une chose: leur espoir de devenir un jour ministre. Et ceux qui ne reconnaissent pas vouloir devenir un jour ministre ne disent pas la vérité.

Car le ministre ne jouit pas simplement de tous les privilèges qui font partie de sa fonction. Il profite aussi de tous ceux que lui offre la société.

Il n'a pas, par exemple, à souffrir des embouteillages étouffants dans les rues de la ville et peut se permettre de dépasser à toute allure les voitures et les camions sous des regards admiratifs et respectueux.

Il n'a pas besoin d'aller travailler à une heure précise et n'a pas à organiser son emploi du temps. Tout est prêt et organisé, même ses déclarations pour les médias.

Il peut beaucoup voyager et découvrir les pays du monde sans être soumis aux fouilles ou aux interrogatoires que font subir les douaniers ou les policiers.

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Quand il décide de boycotter le café parce que son prix est trop élevé, la population l'approuve pour son attitude extraordinaire.

Et s'il adopte une politique qui n'est pas populaire, il est excusé parce que, de toute façon, ce n'est pas de sa faute.

Une fois que son gouvernement a démissionné et qu'il n'est plus ministre, il continue à toucher son salaire pour le restant de ses jours. De plus il peut, en tant qu'ancien ministre, critiquer les politiques du gouvernement sans craindre d'être attaqué ou condamné.

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Sa'eda Kilani

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THE STAR'S

COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

How do Jordanian computer buyers make their purchase decision:

Price still rules

By a Star staff writer

THE AWARENESS of the Jordanian public regarding personal computer products is growing month by month and year after year.

It's interesting to think about the main factor that form a buyer's decision in selecting a PC. Is it the name, is it the origin (American, Taiwanese... etc) or is it just an issue of price?

Upon asking a number of Jordanian computer distributors this question, they provided one similar answer: Price, price and price.

"Our market is still 100% price sensitive," commented Mr. Raed Dallal, General Manager of Mirage Information Systems Group (MIG), the local distributors for the American PC brand ALR.

About two years ago, Jordanian consumers adopted an approach which was purely price-oriented. By doing so, most buyers did not differentiate between brands and rarely wondered whether the PC they were about to buy was American, or Taiwanese or otherwise.

"Today, and after experiencing problems with the not so well established brands, buyers are beginning to ask again for quality products from trusted names," added Mr. Dallal. "This is particularly the case as far as corporate clients are concerned. They are looking for quality systems that will serve them well for a long time."

Jordanian companies which purchase large numbers of systems are looking towards integrated networking solutions. So, it makes sense for them to purchase Novell Certified PC

systems. That, and the need for regular maintenance visits from a professional team, have meant that such buyers usually deal with reputable computer companies in the country which carry quality brands and support them with high levels of service.

"When you're talking about higher end PC systems, buyers understand and appreciate the

(TISG), shared this opinion and stated that the corporate client appreciates quality as is therefore willing to pay that added premium for it.

"An internationally acclaimed Taiwanese brand like Acer is a name synonymous with quality. Buyers understand this and do not view Acer products in the narrow 'American Vs. Taiwanese' perspective."

Mr. Moushaher seconded this idea by stating that not all Taiwanese products are the same compared to American products, and noted Acer products as a prominent example.

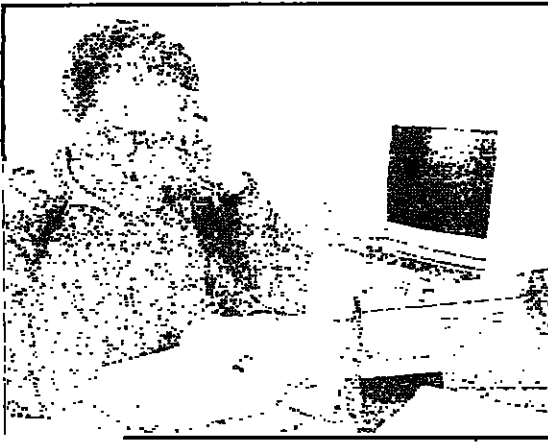
Mr. Abdou of TISG stated that his company also distributes Texas Instruments products in Jordan and feels that a quality American brand name does help in marketing the product to the Jordanian buyer.

Apparently, although its effect is decreasing especially among corporate clients, price still remains the decisive factor for PC purchases in Jordan.

Nowadays, with more power becoming available to the user at lower prices, and with the increased competition among PC manufacturers worldwide, these factors will transpire into the Jordanian market possibly creating a different picture by next year.

The mentality of the buyer is in a state of constant change. The bigger companies in Jordan look forward to this change happening in their favor, creating better awareness to the benefits of quality products and superior services.

Mr. Dia Abdou, marketing manager at Tansh Technology Group



As part of its aim to provide advanced training to banking and financial professionals, in cooperation with BlackBox Corp.

Arab Institute opens Data Communications Laboratory

By Zeid Nasser

THE ARAB Institute for Banking and Financial Studies inaugurated its advanced Data Communications Laboratory here in Amman last month.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Mr. Wesley Egan, the US Ambassador to Jordan, and Dr. Mohammad Sa'ed Al Nabulsi, the new former governor of the Central Bank of Jordan and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Institute for Banking and Financial Studies. Also, a number of distinguished guests attended.

Dr. Mustafa Hodeib, general manager of the Arab Institute for Banking and Financial Studies, said that the opening of this Data Communications Laboratory is in line with the Institute's aims to transfer and utilize advanced technology to meet the current and future needs of Arab banks and financial institutions.

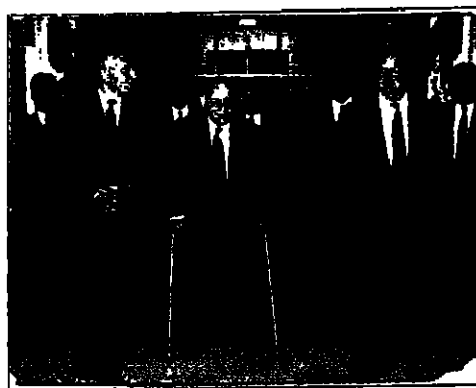
With the establishment of this laboratory, the Arab Institute will continue to build on its achievements of providing professional training of the highest levels to professionals, awarding them with higher academic degrees. He also discussed the institute's plans to offer PhDs.

Mr. Youssef Al Alami, presi-

dent of OI Vision; the regional distributor for Black Box products, commented by saying that the laboratory is designed to provide hands-on training for data communications for end users in Jordan and the Middle

East. The guests were briefed on the facilities offered by Black Box equipment at the data communications laboratory and were later shown a demonstration that highlighted the main utilities of the Internet.

These included browsing several pages on the World Wide Web, including the White House, Library of Congress, Washington University Archives, PC Magazine On-line and others. Access via the Telnet program was demonstrated. The guests were shown utilities that facilitate file transfer, electronic mail and route tracing of messages on the Internet. Mr.



Mr. Al Alami added that the Arab Institute for Banking and Financial Studies is launching four training courses and there are many to be introduced in the future. The courses currently on offer are: Fundamentals of Data Communications, Local Area Networks, Wide Area Networks, Internet.

For more information on training opportunities available at the Data Communications Laboratory at the Arab Institute for Banking and Financial Studies and for more details regarding BlackBox products, contact Mr. Youssef Al Alami at telephone (962 6) 832151/ Fax (9626) 832462.

News update

The rising conflict: Print vs. Interactive media

● One of the main discussions raging at the moment in Europe and the USA is whether the high penetration of Internet into homes and businesses will mean that users will prefer to read their favourite newspapers and magazines on screen, rather than opt for buying the paper copy from the market.

Already, all major publishers offer their publications on the Internet and there is talk of focusing more on this form of media rather than putting high hopes on the development of print media.

This argument is still in its infant stages, so reactions of readers and publishers in the coming years should settle it. But, for now, we are left with a simple thought to contemplate. Will your computer screen replace a printed page as your favourite medium for reading and looking at photographs?

Arabic Lotus Minisuite

● As part of its aim to serve Arabic-language computer users, Lotus recently released a mini-suite package that includes Arabic versions of its most popular productivity applications: Lotus 1-2-3, Lotus Organizer and Lotus Approach all for Windows.

The attractive thing about this suite is its relatively low price compared to other suites and the usefulness of the applications. Arabic Lotus Organizer presents the user with the ability to store phone numbers, addresses, and record appointments all in Arabic. It really provides users with the pleasure of getting organized in their own language. In conjunction with Arabic Lotus 1-2-3 and Approach, they make up a worthwhile investment for small business and home office users.

NCR comes to life again

● Following AT&T's takeover of NCR, the company's name had been changed to Global Information Systems.

However, this month, AT&T has decided to use the NCR name again and to provide NCR operations with independence as a separate company.

The news was an interesting development for NCR staff all over the world who prefer to sell their products under the well known brand name of NCR, which had been on the market for over 100 years when AT&T decided to change it.

Mr. Azzam Shihab, general manager of NCR in Jordan commented on this development by saying that he was pleased about AT&T's decision, as NCR is a known brand name in Jordan and has been on the market since the 1950s.

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

Let's talk I.P.R.

LAST WEEK, the Jordan Computer Society (JCS) hosted an open discussion on the subjects of intellectual property rights (IPR) in Jordan, the registration of trademarks and copyrights, and what the future may hold for Jordanian software producers in terms of providing better protection for their products.

The most interesting thing about the discussion seemed to be the general agreement that the authorities responsible for registration needed to be better educated about intellectual property rights in computing.

What initiated this conversation? Well, apparently, the authorities almost completed the process of licensing the words Internet, CompuServe and Prodigy to a Jordanian company which applied for registry of these words. Imagine, if it went through then any one else who wanted to use such a general word as 'Internet' would have had to take permission from this company or would face legal action!

A number of people involved in the industry moved against this and made sure that the authorities at the trademarks department in the Ministry were made aware of what was happening. As a matter of fact, they are preparing a comprehensive list of 'general computer-related terms' for people working in that department to check before registering anything relevant to the computer industry.

In any case, this all reminds me of a time when the computer sector in the country played a more active role in educating public institutions and the legal sector in the country about the specifics of computing.

As a matter of fact, they led a tough battle against piracy and worked for the enforcement of copyright laws. If my memory serves me well, this 'Intellectual Property Rights Committee' included Mr. Samer Mubarak of Comsoft, Mr. Raseem Abdel Rahim from the American Embassy, Attorney Vicky Dallal, Mr. Abdullah Al Tagi the area manager of Microsoft and possibly others.

However, their battle against piracy and everybody else's, it seems, has slowed down. Maybe it's because joining the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) will mean that Jordan will have to apply strict intellectual property rights laws. These, of course, apply to more than just computer software. Video tapes, music tapes and even copied CDs will be prohibited.

The impact of this on a number of Jordanian businesses will be tremendous. It is expected that many video and music shops will go out of business. As for software, there are few shops that offer pirated copies.

The big impact can be expected in the lives of Jordanian users who have become accustomed to obtaining all the software they want for free.

Still, piracy is expected to continue to exist as it cannot be regulated down to the copies borrowed by friends. Even in the mature computer markets of Europe and the US, piracy cannot be efficiently regulated among home computer users, which is fine for business software producers who need to keep their eye open mainly on companies who use their software.

Getting back to the topic that started this whole argument, which is the proper implementation of intellectual property rights (IPR) in Jordan, it seems that better understanding of what is needed and the kind of protection that foreign investors and software publishers expect, requires co-ordination efforts between the private sector and the public sectors in Jordan.

So, the ball is in the court of Jordanian software developers to lobby for an effective IPR law and, following the 'abnormal registry' issue discussed above, it looks like all companies interested in trading computer hardware and technology have to keep an eye open.

Maybe, given time and attention from those involved, IPR issues related to computing will be handled differently.

Gifted education gets a world hearing in Amman

By Munther Hamdan

Special to The Star

JORDAN IS a leader in gifted education. It takes pride in having the first school in the region for gifted children.

Noor Al Hussein Foundation and the Jubilee school organized a regional Workshop on Gifted and Talented Education last week. The workshop took place in the Jubilee school on 14-17 January. The event was patronized by the United Nations Education Bureau for Arab States (UNEDBAS). The three-day Workshop consisted of lectures and video films which explain the different methods of teaching for the gifted. It is the first workshop that hosted a large number of experts from the Arab and foreign countries in this field to be held in the region.

The opening ceremony was held at the Royal Culture Centre under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor represented by HRH Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad. The ceremony included speeches by Dr. Fathi Jarwan, the director of the Jubilee School, Thouqan Ubeidat representing the Minister of Education and Dr. Salman Salaman representing Dr. Abd Al Qader Al Atrash, the Director of the UNESCO office. The speakers highlighted the importance of holding a conference which draws attention to the gifted.

"The Arab countries are wasting one of their most precious resources—gifted and talented students," Dr. Jarwan said. One of the speakers, Dr. Jawad Al Anani lectured on the role of the Arab mind in encountering development challenges for the coming stage. He concentrated on the practicality of education which changes in accordance with technological and political development. The human mind, he said is able to interact with social institutions to find solutions from within.

The workshop was an unprecedented event in the region. It hosted experts, teachers and researchers from Arab and foreign countries. Participants were expected to interact and benefit from each other's experiences in this field of edu-

cation.

The workshop has main objectives to achieve. It provides an opportunity for concerned individuals and organizations to discuss and communicate experiences about programs for G/T (Gifted and Talented) children. There will be a network in the Arab states concerning this issue. The workshop also demonstrated procedures and examples of teaching appli-

into groups to discuss the importance of self awareness in determining future decisions. If this teaching method is adopted in our schools, the education system would witness real progress. The other two lectures were "Thoughtful Classroom" and "Computer assisted Learning".

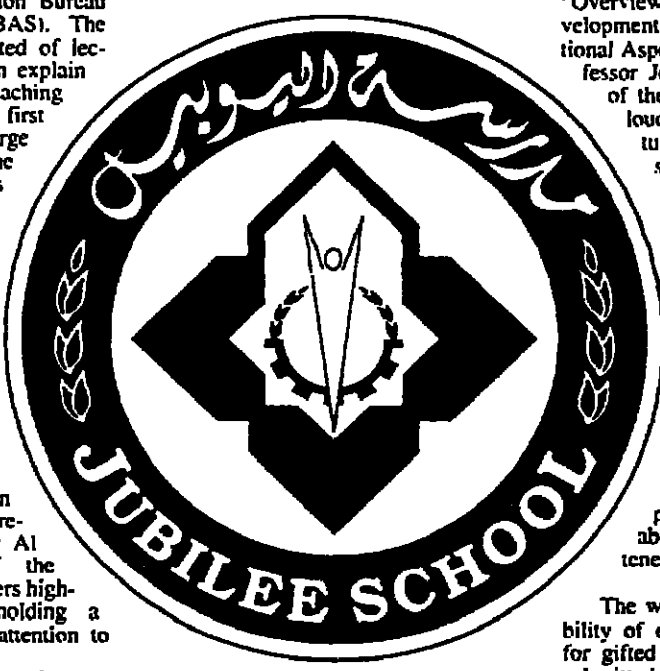
The second day witnessed a large number of activities. Among these were "Creativity" by Dr. Nadia Surour, "Overview of Recent Studies on the Development of Giftedness" and "Emotional Aspects of Being Gifted" by Professor Joan Freeman and "Teachers of the Gifted" by Dr. Maha Zah-louq from Syria. Among the lectures, were also "Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students in the UAE" by Dr. Mohamed Al Bili, and "Classes for Gifted Students in Secondary Schools" by Dr. Salah Deen Allam from Egypt. There was a Tele Conference from the US by Dr. Stephani Marshall who talked about programs and schools for the gifted and Dr. Susanne Richert who talked about maximizing the potential model. The two experts talked to the participants about the workshop and listened to questions and comments.

The workshop discussed the possibility of establishing an Arab society for gifted children. The proposal was submitted by Noor Al Hussein Foundation to the Regional Office of UNESCO in Amman. "There is a pressing need for a UNESCO-sponsored conference of concerned Arab authorities (including expert individuals and institutions) to formulate realistic goals for a large regional program aiming at promoting the education of gifted and talented children," Dr. Jarwan told The Star.

This workshop comes as a significant step towards developing the methods of teaching for the gifted and students in general. The Jubilee school and the UNESCO regional office have set up the basis for a regional and international meeting to provide the gifted with opportunities not found in other schools.

cable to the G/T students and adaptable in classrooms to serve all students.

The workshop featured lectures and video shows which introduced new methods in teaching G/T students. On the first day, Dr. Jarwan spoke of the academic acceleration for G/T students. He said that academic acceleration is mainly concerned with students' abilities regardless of their age. He gave examples about students who were admitted to schools and universities before they reached the required age of admission. In the library of the school, a video show demonstrated a number of Jubilee School students interacting with each other without the interference of the teachers. The students were divided



Facing Mecca from Mayo A look at the Islamic community in Ireland

By Edel Barghouti

Star Staff Writer

DUBLIN (Star)—On a Friday morning in the north western Irish town of Ballyhaunis County Mayo, a handful of devout Muslims turn towards Mecca to pray. Their religion requires believers to face the holy city of Mecca and pray five times a day. This barefooted group of worshippers belong to the small Islamic community scattered throughout Ireland, a nation on the western most tip of the European continent.

The majority of Ireland's population of four million is Roman Catholic and because of its geographical isolation from Europe, among other things, Ireland has never been regarded as a place for mass emigration by economic or political refugees. Britain for example, is home to about 1.3 million Muslims. Both France and Germany each count 2.2 million. Muslims are a major section of their ethnic communities. In comparison, only 6,000 people are numbered as members of the Islamic community in Ireland, a tiny fraction of this country's population.

The Muslims of Ireland are scattered all over its four provinces with larger groups in the cities of Dublin, Cork and Galway. About 40% of them have settled permanently here, are married and bringing up their families. The other 60% are students and workers who intend to return to their countries of origin. Ireland has been good to its small Muslim community.

The first Islamic school in the British Isles was opened in Dublin in September 1990 by President Mary Robinson. It serves a growing population of Muslims and is partly funded by the Irish government. An impressive mosque is located in the heart of the capital city and smaller ones can be found in the cities of Cork, Galway and Mayo.

Mr. Yabia Al Hussein is the director of the Islamic foundation of Ireland based in Dublin. He remarked on the fact that the Muslim community has adapted so well here in Ireland.

"The vast majority of Muslims here in Ireland has settled well and been fully accepted by Irish people. Since the 1950's when Muslims first arrived on these shores, there has never been any friction between the two distinct communities. We as Muslims are respected and cared for by the Irish government and the people of this land. We in turn honor Irish traditions and culture, often taking them on as part of our own lifestyles."

The Islamic Foundation of Ireland strives to develop awareness and acceptance of the Islamic tradition among Irish citizens. Courses in Arabic language and Islamic history are available at the foundation as a way to open its doors to all Irish people irrespective of religious persuasion. Visitors are welcomed at Dublin's mosque. On average one school week organizes a tour of its facilities. The people of Ireland are interested in learning from and about the different communities who live in their midst. "I have never suffered from any form of discrimination here, even the press has given us positive coverage over the years," declares Mr. Al Hussein.

population. Such dilemmas seem not to exist here in Ireland. This ideal situation between two religious groups could have something to do with the fact that in Ireland's growing economy, 6,000 immigrants hardly pose a threat to the unemployed. It may also be that the Muslim community in Ireland has integrated fully into society and not insisted on living in small isolated groups, as happened elsewhere in Europe.

There is no one area in Dublin, or any other Irish city, where Muslims live, eat, shop or congregate. They can be found in many of the rural villages and sprawling suburbs that make up this country. The majority of Muslims who have settled here permanently have married into Irish families and adopted Irish values into their daily life.

Many of them contribute to Irish society through their professions as doctors, engineers and self-employed business people. Perhaps the most successful of these is Dr. Mousajee Bhamjee who serves the people of County Clare in Southern Ireland as their member of parliament. Married to an Irish woman, Clare Kenny, Bhamjee as he likes to be called, has accomplished the successful blending of two cultures. A Muslim of South African origin, Dr. Bhamjee explains how he achieved what has eluded many high profile Muslims in mainland Europe.

"Prior to my election to the Irish government in November 1992, people in County Clare knew me as a local doctor, a member of the community who fought for them on many issues. I was successful in the election because I pledged to work to save our local hospital, and the environment as well provide more facilities for the area. My ethnic background has never been a real issue. I have only ever experienced dis-

crimination here once and that was 30 years ago when I was training to be a doctor in Dublin. I think the Irish people have fully accepted me as firstly a concerned member of parliament and secondly a Muslim."

In recent months this existence between the Irish and Muslim communities has seen trouble looming on the horizon. A group of more militant Muslims has come in from mainland Europe and were trying to encourage their counterparts in Ireland to resist assimilation. Believed to be originally from Pakistan, they are currently travelling from town to town trying to drum up support for their cause. The liberal Muslims of Ireland see no place for extremism here and fear its consequences. They and the people of Ireland have solved the equation many European countries are struggling with.

"We are now a coffee coloured world," Dr. Bhamjee stressed. "People of all different colors, background, languages, and religions make up our world. Ireland's attitude to foreigners is very welcoming and we intend to work with the people of this land to keep it that way. We fear a rise in fundamentalism will erode the excellent relations that we all enjoy. We, the more liberal Muslims, don't intend to let that happen."

The Islamic way of life is respected in Ireland. There is no tension between the two communities. Rather each hold the others beliefs and laws in high esteem. Ireland's Islamic community can face Mecca to pray in the knowledge that their religion and way of life is truly respected by their host country and its inhabitants. This little island has succeeded where greater powers have failed.